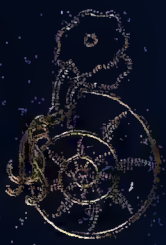

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WHALERS AND WHALING

by

E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

London

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PREFACE

I HAVE endeavoured in this volume to present as vivid a picture of whaling ships, and the lives of those serving in them, as I can obtain from contemporary accounts, with the object of showing to the reader, whilst still one sailing-ship whaler survives, what were the adventures and enterprise of an industry which forms one of the most romantic sections of maritime history.

This is the story of ships and men whose business took them out not on a few weeks' trip, but on long cruises often lasting for several years north, south, east and west, up to the Arctic, down to the Antarctic, and round the world. Whaling is at once an ancient and a modern profession of the sea, which has called forth some of those high qualities of courage and seamanlike skill which have been exhibited by Britons and Americans, Dutchmen, Norwegians and others in different generations and varying vessels.

I have laid particular stress on the hard experiences and mode of life which these seamen have been compelled to undertake, and have tried to show the brilliant successes as well as the great depressions through which the occupation has had to pass. Finally, in the chapters which deal in detail with that very recent but highly prosperous steam whaling, the reader will be able to see an amazing revival which links the Norsemen of a thousand years ago with their descendants to-day.

It is hoped that this record may help to encourage still further that deep sea call which has sounded throughout the ages, and has become clearer still

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during the last ten years. So many letters continue to reach me from readers all over the world that it has become impossible to answer them save a few: but with the passing of the last days of sail it is a joy to know that a new and fresh enthusiasm for the sea and its ships has grown up so lustily.

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness to Scoresby, Bennett, Weddell and other authorities of the past; to Mr. Robert McNab's *The Old Whaling Days*; and to the interesting Interdepartmental Report published by H.M. Stationery Office dealing with the Dependencies of the Falklands.

E. KEBLE CHATTERTON

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WHALERS AND WHALING

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE story of whaling is really linked up with that of exploration, especially of the northern regions, from the very first. Greenland had been discovered by the Norse in the ninth century, and during the following century two colonies had been founded there, but later on there ensued a long interval. However, towards the end of the sixteenth century there was a wonderful burst of commercial ambition in Northern Europe and a desire to find both new markets as well as new resources. The solution lay in discovering fresh territories and unknown sea routes. Merchants banded themselves together into small companies, fitted out ships and placed their goods aboard.

Now the Dutch were fired with similar motives to the English. During long years of herring fishing they had both become wealthy and built up a fine race of seamen, to say nothing of a splendid fleet of ships. The desire was to reach China and tap Chinese wealth; but instead of going all the way down the Bay of Biscay and round the Cape of Good Hope or the Horn, it was desired to find a route north about. For this reason we find the Dutch fitting out a squadron of four ships which were despatched with

William Barentsz, a distinguished Dutch navigator, as pilot, starting off in 1594 to seek for the North-East Passage. This voyage was fruitless and the ships returned home. Another expedition under the same pilotage was attempted, and this also failed. But in 1596 by the munificence of Amsterdam a third expedition was sent out, consisting of two ships, and during this voyage Barentsz discovered Spitzbergen, doubled the north-east cape of Nova Zembla (which had already been discovered by the English navigator Willoughby), but unfortunately one of the two ships became embayed in the drifting ice, and this was Barentsz's vessel.

It became necessary to leave her, and the crew built a hut ashore, where they suffered much cold, many hardships, and the unwelcome attention of Polar bears. Barentsz died in those winter quarters at Nova Zembla during 1597, and it was not until 1871 that a Norwegian explorer came upon these winter quarters and discovered part of Barentsz's journal. There arrived in Amsterdam, however, by way of Lapland, some of his crew. Now the value of these expeditions lay in the news which was brought back concerning, among other things, the whales which were to be found in those northern regions, and this information was presently to be made use of by Barentsz's countrymen.

But in the year 1630 one of the English syndicates, the Russia Company, sent out from London three ships to go whaling off the coast of Greenland. One of these ships was the *Salutation*, and when she had reached her destination, she sent her boat ashore with eight men to get venison, having provided them with a couple of dogs, a firelock, lances and a tinder-box. The *Salutation* brought up off the shore, but next day the weather came on thick, the wind blew hard from the north, and the ship was com-

pelled to clear out to sea. Left behind, these eight men found themselves in a difficult situation, but they were able to shoot their deer. They came across a rough house which had been built by Dutch whalers who fished off here and had been used to protect the coopers whilst employed making casks for oil. A number of old unserviceable ships' boats which other whalers had left behind on the shore were used as firewood. By means of their harpoon the crew were able to kill walrus, and they could roast the meat. As the weeks sped by and the cold increased, and their clothes became tattered, they made needles out of whalebone, made thread out of rope-yarn and thus sewed their rags together. For a lamp they found a piece of lead, put in some rope yarn as wick, filled the lead utensil with whale oil left behind by the coopers, and thus were able to have a light and make themselves fairly comfortable.

When the food began to run low, they limited themselves to one flesh meal a day, but on Wednesdays and Fridays ate of such scraps of whale fat as had been thrown aside by the previous whalers after the oil had been pressed out. Finally this also ran short and they killed a bear and ate that for three weeks. But after months of this kind of life there arrived off the coast a Hull whaler. And the latter, realizing that in the previous year eight men had been left behind, sent a boat ashore to inquire. To their mutual joy the Hull whalers and the eight men met, but the latter presented a strange, uncouth sight, black with soot and smoke, and their clothes in tatters. Presently the rescuers took them aboard, and thus the men reached England, where the Russia Company made awards to them for the distress endured during those long nights and days.

During that seventeenth century the Greenland Company of Holland took great pains to continue

their peaceful penetration in that northern region, and even left there seven volunteer sailors in order to get definite data concerning the weather and keep a careful journal of their observations. This was in August 1633, and the whaling fleet then went back to Holland, and the journal was kept faithfully until the following April, when it ended on the last day. For when some Dutch whalers arrived in Greenland in June they found each of the seven men lying in his own locker dead, since they had perished of scurvy and cold: so whilst the whaling fleet fired a volley from their guns the men were buried on Midsummer Day. In that same year 1633 the fleet which had landed these seven men in Greenland landed seven other sailors to winter at Spitzbergen. The latter happily survived and were brought home in the year following.

But seven other volunteers now took their place and kept a journal of their observations as long as possible, and these men recorded the fact that there were plenty of whales about. But when once more the whaling fleet came out from Holland in 1635 they found all the seven men dead, some of them having apparently died in agony, for their knees were drawn up to their chin. This seems to have been the last occasion when the Dutch left winter observers behind, but the information obtained was to add to the slender knowledge then possessed. It was in 1646 that a dramatic surprise awaited a Dutch whaling ship that had been sent off to the Spitzbergen district under John Cornelius.

Leaving the Texel in May, the ship was near Spitzbergen a month later, but owing to the presence of ice was prevented from anchoring. On putting out to sea two whales were sighted in the offing, so Cornelius sent his boat with a good crew after the mammals. But whilst the boat was rowing up

and down, awaiting an opportunity to attack one of the big creatures, they discovered a large ice shoal floating some distance away, and something thereon which they supposed to be bears. The harpooner, however, insisted that these were no bears and persuaded the rest to row alongside. There was a certain amount of reluctance and argument, but, behold, when the boat approached it was found that there was no bear but a man waving a signal of distress!

Thereupon everyone pulled as hard as he could, and finally, to their utter amazement they discovered four living men and one dead. By the former's language they realized that here were four Englishmen, so they took them into the boat and rowed them back to the ship. The condition of these men was pitiable, for they had eaten nothing for a long time except a leather belt, which they had divided up amongst themselves. The whaler's surgeon took charge of these four who had suffered so terribly from cold and hunger, and in spite of his best endeavours, three of them died within a week, but the fourth was brought back safely to Delft and so got a passage home. It was from him that the story was learned, how his vessel had been wrecked on that ice shoal with a crew of forty-two. Seventeen of them with the captain had started off in the ship's boat to make the land, and it was then to return for the rest: but nothing was ever heard of her, and as a gale of wind sprang up soon after she had started, the boat unquestionably foundered before reaching land. The remaining twenty-four on the ice lived on the provisions as long as they lasted, some of the two dozen separating on to different ice shoals in the hope that at least one might drift ashore and so preserve life. But not one of these other parties was ever seen again, although Cornelius sent his boat to cruise in search of them. It was

indeed a real miracle that even one man had been picked up: and it would be difficult to imagine any surprise of the sea more enthralling than when this poor sailor was seen waving to the whaleboat. But still the whale-ships continued to come north to these waters, and if we cannot trace every voyage, at least we know that the rewards were sufficiently tempting and the knowledge sufficiently reasonable to make the risks worth while.

Modern whaling is just sixty years old, for its period is carefully marked by the introduction of the harpoon-gun, which was made successfully in the year 1865. The effect of this was to revolutionize the industry, which has had a most varied and a most romantic life. Originally the harpoon, as used for capturing whales and large fish, was just a flat piece of iron, triangular in shape, with sharp barbs. This was attached to a wooden handle, and to the latter was made fast the long rope. But the toggle-iron came as an improvement with its pointed shaft and pivoted crosspiece, so that after the shaft had pierced well into the fibrous tissue below the blubber, the crosspiece, at the pulling of the rope, instead of lying up and down the shaft was set at right angles and thus prevented the shaft from being withdrawn.

The harpoon-gun, whether fired from the shoulder or from a swivel-gun mounted on a pivot, enabled the harpoon or toggle-iron with line attached to be aimed with accuracy and to strike with such force that the rorquals or finbacks, which had previously been left untouched, could now be hunted. For in that order of mammals which we call cetacea, the larger members of the family are the whale, and these are subdivided into the whalebone whales and the toothed whales. The whalebone whales, again, are further divided into the right whales, the finbacks or rorquals, the humpback, the grey whale of the

Pacific, and that rare pigmy whale whose whalebone is so valuable. The right whale has no dorsal fin, and its cervical vertebræ are fused into a solid mass. The Greenland right whale, with its great head and arched mouth, made itself well known in the Arctic, being about 50 ft. long. A smaller species, known as the southern right whale, became known in the waters of the southern seas.

The toothed whale class have no whalebone but they have teeth, whereas the whalebone genus has not. Now in the toothed whale class are included such species as the cachalot, the bottlenose, the grampus and the narwhal. The cachalot, or sperm whale, with its great head itself measuring about one-third of its total length, is sometimes as much as 60 ft. long, and has over a score of teeth on its lower jaw. It is a characteristic of this cachalot that he can remain under water for twenty minutes at a time. The sperm whale goes about in schools, does not frequent either Polar region, but is commonest in tropical and sub-tropical seas. And just because it was hunted with great zest during the earlier part of the nineteenth century it naturally became scarce. The late Frank T. Bullen in his sea classic *The Cruise of the Cachalot* has left for us a most entertaining description of the methods employed during the old sailing-ship days for hunting this mammal. The impelling motive which sent those old-time whalers to sea after the cachalot was the great commercial reward; for the sperm oil from the blubber, and the spermaceti contained in a cavity of the great head, are valuable as an ingredient of ointments and in the making of candles. The use of gas and electric lighting, however, during the nineteenth century somewhat modified this use. Sperm oil, none the less, is a well-known lubricant in great demand. Ambergris was yet a third of the important entities

found in the cachalot, and this, after extraction from the whale's intestine, was found of great value as a basis for the manufacture of perfumery. The teeth, too, make valuable ivory. Thus, in a word, the hunting of the cachalot was a most important industry.

At the beginning of the twentieth century whaling seemed to be drawing to its close by reason of the cachalot's scarcity. But in the year 1904 the discovery of a new whaling ground in sub-Antarctic seas gave such a fresh impetus that the industry reached a success hitherto unprecedented. The rorquals have declined alarmingly in numbers, and it was because of this that at the present time the industry in those waters depends almost exclusively on the blue whale, which is the largest animal known, measuring up to 100 ft. There are still a certain number of sperm whales being caught off the South African coasts.

It is, however, to be noted that the zeal with which the industry was carried on in the north led to the reduction in the number of whales, so that no other animals of this class returned to the areas which had once been so plentiful. The Greenland whaling, for instance, has for that reason long since become extinct, yet at one time it was very famous. Spitzbergen, where the whale was once found in great numbers, has been similarly deserted. But at the date of writing it is quite possible that the ancient whaling occupation, which has trained some of the finest of the world's seamen under sail, may receive a still further development: for by an arrangement between the British Colonial Office and the Government of the Falkland Islands an expedition has been organized for a most detailed study of the whaling problem, and that historic ship *Discovery*, which Scott used for polar work, was specially selected, and then in the spring of 1925 fitted out at Portsmouth. The results

of this new expedition, with a mass of scientific facts, may quite conceivably give an entirely new life to whaling hitherto undreamed of.

Certainly English ships had been engaged in this important occupation of whale-hunting ever since the end of the sixteenth century. The port of Hull was especially noted for this trade right away down till about 1868, when, owing to the scarcity of the mammals, the industry died a natural death. The very last whaling voyage from that port was made by the *Truelove*, which had been built in Philadelphia 104 years previously. This vessel was one of the most remarkable craft that ever sailed the seas, and it would be difficult to find many ships in all maritime history which so ably justified the builders. Seventy-two was the number of whaling voyages which the *Truelove* made, and 500 were the whales which she captured. And besides all this activity she put in a good deal of time in such voyages as the Oporto wine trade, and even as a "Letter of Marque." During the American War of Independence she was captured by the British and that was how she came to be owned in Hull and in 1784 began her career from the Humber as a whaler. It was in 1806 that at the age of forty-two she made her first trip to the Davis Straits, and went off there again in 1831. Her last voyage as a whaler was in 1868, but five years later she visited Philadelphia, where she was given a hearty welcome and returned across the Atlantic to be broken up.

In these days of steam it is a little difficult to realize how important was this whaling industry when those old ships with their somewhat heavy lines went lumbering along to the northern waters. Whitby, Scarborough and London used to send whalers to the Arctic, and in the year 1821 no fewer than sixty-one whalers sailed out of Hull, thirty-two

for that area between Greenland and Spitzbergen, and twenty-nine for the Davis Straits. But it was the English colonists in America who first got the whaling fishery on a systematic basis, when they began the sperm whaling about the end of the seventeenth century owing to the proximity of Greenland and other prolific breeding grounds. The result of this was to build up a whole chapter of history and romance which will ever be regarded as one of the most interesting in the whole maritime development of Northern America. It is only comparatively recently that the great American people in their literature, their pictures, and even in their cinematograph films have awakened to the wonderful importance of that old whaling period, which did so much towards attracting easterners to the sea and shipbuilding.

Formerly England was chiefly content to import from American colonists such products of this whaling fishery as she required. But then arrived the War of Independence, and it became necessary for the old country to obtain those commodities direct which hitherto she had largely left to her colonies to supply. Thus it was that even from the year 1775 ships were sent out from British ports to engage in the sperm whale fishery. They were only ten in number, and owned chiefly by the firm of Messrs. Enderby. But in the following year this trade was encouraged by a Government bounty ranging from £100 to £500, and the number of whaling ships went on progressively increasing until the year 1791.

In one of Edmund Burke's speeches of the year 1775 on the subject of conciliation with America he addressed the House of Commons on the matter of the New England fisheries, and I cannot resist quoting here his remarks, for they shed a most illuminating light on what was the British attitude

at the period. With reference to the remark concerning the Falklands, we must remember that these islands had been discovered in the sixteenth century, but at first were regarded as not worth having; in fact, two years before Burke's speech was delivered Britain temporarily occupied West Falkland but abandoned it, and eventually the growth of the Falklands' importance was attained owing to the increase of the whale fishery. It was by the irony of fate that off this territory was to be fought in 1914 the only decisive naval battle of the Great War.

"As to the wealth which the Colonies have drawn from the sea by their fisheries," Burke told the House, "you had all that matter fully opened at your bar. You surely thought those acquisitions of value, for they seemed even to excite your envy. And yet the spirit by which that enterprising employment has been exercised ought rather, in my opinion, to have raised your esteem and admiration. And pray, Sir, what in the world is equal to it? Pass by the other parts, and look at the manner in which the people of New England have of late carried on the Whale Fishery. Whilst we follow them among the tumbling mountains of ice and behold them penetrating into the deepest frozen recesses of Hudson's Bay and Davis's Straits, whilst we are looking for them beneath the Arctic Circle, we hear that they have pierced into the opposite region of polar cold, that they are at the Antipodes and engaged under the frozen Serpent of the south. Falkland Island, which seemed too remote and romantic an object for the grasp of national ambition, is but a stage and resting-place in the progress of their victorious industry. Nor is the equinoctial heat more discouraging to them than the accumulated winter of both the poles. We know that whilst some of them draw the line and strike the harpoon on the coast of Africa, others run the longi-

tude [i.e. steer due south] and pursue their gigantic game along the coast of Brazil. No sea but what is vexed by their fisheries. No climate that is not witness to their toils. Neither the perseverance of Holland, nor the activity of France, nor the dexterous and firm sagacity of English enterprise ever carried this most perilous mode of hardy industry to the extent to which it has been pushed by this recent people, a people who are still, as it were, but in the gristle and not yet hardened into the bone of manhood."

But so inexperienced were British seamen in sperm fishing that for some years it was necessary to appoint an American commanding officer and harpooner to each ship until competent officers could be trained. At this period whaling was carried on principally off Greenland and Ireland, off the Western Islands of the Azores, the coast of Africa, Brazil and the Falklands. It was not till 1788 that the Enderby whaler *Emilia* rounded Cape Horn and was the first to inaugurate sperm whale fishery in the Pacific. It was a brief but successful voyage, and thus she was a pioneer in that ocean for future profit. For the cachalot grounds were gradually discovered, and to such an extent that in 1819 the British whaler *Syren* first revealed that unexplored and valuable tract off the Japanese coast. So prolific with the sperm whale was this locality that even after its yield had been considerably diminished by frequent whaling, it was possible to obtain 40,000 barrels of oil there by the fleets in the early nineteenth century.

The next spheres of whalers to be hunted were in the Indian Ocean. The industry went on prospering, and there were few seas in the world that did not see either British or American whalers cruising. It was these or none other: for the other nations were now making but feeble efforts to engage in this work. But by about the time Queen Victoria came to the

throne whaling in the South Seas had already passed its prime. Money was scarce in those days and the return from the heavy investment of capital in South Sea whalers was both slow and already risky, so that not more than thirty or forty whaling ships were cruising the warmer waters by the year 1840. An additional reason for this lay in the fact that the colony of New South Wales was now engaged in obtaining the sperm oil from its fishery at a much less cost of time and capital, and able to export it into England.

Leaving out the great changes which have taken place in the value of money during the last eighty years, it is worth while noticing some of the details of cost. To fit out a whaler in London for the southern seas—"South-Seaman" was the name they were wont to give her—used to require anything from £8,000 to £12,000. She was seldom away less than two and a half years, but this was not infrequently exceeded. And if the result, as latterly had become the case, were unsuccessful, all that capital had been tied up uselessly. On the other hand, a whaler might come back from the South Seas to London with 250 tuns of sperm oil which would realize £80 a tun: £24,000 in return for the capital expended, but with the ship still afloat and some of her stores remaining.

An average cargo in the prosperous times amounted to 160 tuns of oil, and the largest cargo which an early nineteenth-century British whaler ever brought into the country was 330 tuns. This was in the *Rochester*, Captain Smith, the year being 1830; but the largest sperm oil cargo ever taken into the United States up to that date in one whaler was 4,050 barrels, or more than 500 tuns. The British whaler *Tuscan* was away from 1833 to 1836, and during those three years sighted sperm whales on 90 different days. She was able to kill and secure to

the ship no fewer than 78 of them, and arrived home with 1,953 barrels, or 244 tuns of oil, which was a remarkably good cargo. But if we select the period from 1820 till 1832 we find that the amount of sperm oil brought into Britain by British whalers rose from 2,264 tuns to 5,576 tuns.

We have to remember that the use of lamps and machinery was increasing during those early nineteenth-century days, and this gave a greater demand for the sperm oil. One author writing on this subject in the year 1840 remarked: "The very general adoption of gas for the purpose of illumination, and which might reasonably be expected to lessen the demand for oil, has not had that effect—on the contrary, it would appear that the increased light of the shops and streets rather induces persons to add to their domestic illumination in a proportionate degree."

During those early years of the nineteenth century the American whalers numbered a fleet of about 350, many of which were engaged exclusively in hunting the sperm whale. Such an American ship was owned by a syndicate of small capitalists which included the master and officers. In Britain the custom rather was for one merchant to own several of these craft. The size of whalers at that time varied from 250 to 400 tons burthen. The "South-Seaman" and the Greenlander had to go out light and return with their cargoes already consisting of the produce separated from the non-lucrative parts of the whale. It was a series of long voyages, and unlimited time was essential both for the searching of indefinite areas and for the extraction of the oil when the capture had been made.

CHAPTER II

THE NORTHERN QUEST

THE desire to find both the North-East and the North-West Passages has at various times and in all sorts of ships attracted the sailors of Northern Europe towards the Arctic Seas, but with long lulls. Thus, after the times of Hudson and Fotherby there ensued an interval until the zeal for Polar discovery was kindled in the reign of George III. Papers were read before the Royal Society, and eventually two vessels of the Royal Navy, *Racehorse* and *Carcass*, were despatched, the young Horatio Nelson serving in the latter. Hitherto all these northern expeditions had been fitted out by merchants with a desire to find either a passage and trade route for their goods, or areas suitable for capturing whales. But this Georgian enterprise was the first effort which had the pursuit of science as its sole object. Starting out in 1773, it was away only from May to September, but the resultant information was hardly such as to enthuse the desire for discovery, and those northern regions again fell into oblivion until there came into notice a man named Scoresby.

William Scoresby was born in 1789 at Whitby, that historic port which at one time harboured a fleet of whalers, and also those famous Geordie brigs which used to fetch the coal from Newcastle to London. Cook, the great explorer, was apprenticed to one of these Whitby colliers over forty years before Scoresby saw the light, and from this Yorkshire haven some of the finest English sailors set

forth in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Now Scoresby's career is a most interesting one, for he was a product of a severe school of seamanship; he was made to rough it on board from an early age, he became one of the greatest whaling captains in history, a distinguished explorer, and was given that unique distinction of being elected a Fellow of the Royal Society, publishing some valuable matter dealing with the practical side of whaling and the scientific study of the Arctic regions.

He was only eleven when he made his first Greenland voyage, he was but seventeen when he made the nearest approach to the North Pole that had ever been fully authenticated, being at that time mate of his father's Greenland whaler. It was the information which Scoresby and others of this industry accumulated that provided the necessary data for the great explorers of the nineteenth century: we can never be too grateful to those pioneer whalers who risked their lives and ships among the ice in uncharted seas. Sailing, towing, boring, warping, they opened up a track with the object of pursuing the whale: but each voyage brought back more and more intelligence concerning winds and tides and ice-barriers. Scoresby used to land at Spitzbergen and elsewhere, climbing summits, making observations, studying the bird life and doing many things quite outside the sphere of mere whaling. After he became of age he continued to make these Greenland voyages annually, but the most important of his discoveries were made in the year 1822 when he sailed in the 321-ton ship *Baffin*, with a crew of fifty. He left Liverpool on March 27th bent on whaling, but never an opportunity was missed of adding to scientific knowledge, and after passing the eightieth degree a month later, he reached the main northern ice. The first whale was caught

on May 6th, but soon his ship became involved in the floating ice and only with difficulty was she extricated.

Now these waters had been fished for many generations and were therefore becoming unproductive, so the only satisfactory results were to be obtained on the eastern shores of Greenland. Along here Scoresby penetrated to parts that had never been explored, and after naming these bays and forelands and peninsulas, he went further east in search of his whales. It was during one of these attempts that a harpooner had just got his weapon into the whale when the latter started off with such speed that the line was jerked out of its lead and the boat nearly swamped. The harpooner, a real expert, tried to catch hold of the line and replace it in its proper position, when he got caught by a sudden turn, dragged overboard and drowned.

Several more whales were taken, and after further exploration, being surrounded by icebergs, Scoresby altered course, and on August 15th had the good luck to sight and strike five whales, of which three were taken. This completed his cargo and the *Baffin* returned home after a voyage that was successful both financially and scientifically. And to that knowledge which Scoresby brought home, other venturers added in subsequent years. But Scoresby was just one of a long line of seamen who had been attracted by the magnetic north. The opening up of the waters in these high latitudes, even if there was neither a north-east nor a north-west passage for the English merchants' goods, set going a new industry whose profits had not even been suspected. It had been really a lucky find whilst searching for a route to India north-about. The news spread, and thus there had come English, Dutch, French and Spanish ships by the early seventeenth century, with the inevitable

jealousies too. Each nationality tried to elbow the others out of these valuable waters, and occasionally there was an actual encounter. It would be difficult to support the claim of the seventeenth-century English whalers as "lords of the northern seas," and we can well understand how much foreign nations resented this exclusive claim.

The Dutch Whaling Company even sent out seven stout, well-armed ships, and in 1618 there came a crisis when an English whaler was captured and sailed off to Amsterdam. However, the Dutch Government deemed it prudent to restore this vessel, her cargo and crew: but those who had made the capture were also rewarded. And finally, since there was room for all, since there were just as big whales in those northern seas as ever came out, it was decided to divide up the areas in the neighbourhood of Spitzbergen among the various national whaling fleets, in order that the industry might flourish peaceably. The Dutch especially found in this activity a great source of wealth, and it is largely due to their diligence and resource that whaling progressed. Some of their methods and actual words (for example "flensing") are in use to this day. This applies especially to the operations employed in getting the oil from the whale after capture.

English and Scottish fishermen of all kinds have, especially since the sixteenth century, learnt much of their art from the Dutch: even their very vessels for years were unquestionably influenced by the fishermen the other side of the North Sea. Let us, then, not forget the debt we owe to Holland in regard to our present subject. The difficulty was as follows. Having arrived in Spitzbergen waters, those ships were of such small tonnage that after harpooning two or three big whales, the vessel was full up. Therefore the Dutch evolved the practice of extracting the oil

and bones, in fact concentrating all the valuable products into such a space that not three but numerous whales could be used. It was for this purpose that they installed ashore boilers and tanks, coolers and all necessary apparatus of a factory. The whales had only to be killed, brought ashore, and then the produce was compressed out of them.

Here the dead mammals were "flensed," that is to say, cleared of blubber and bone. Here, in these isolated latitudes, collected during the summer months quite a village population from Holland. Here were furnaces and stores and everyone hard at work, and the bay full of whaling ships. Such, indeed, was the activity that in 1697 there were no fewer than one hundred and eighty-eight of these vessels, having on board the extracts of nearly two thousand whales. But as has happened over and over again in the history of whaling, all this excessive fishing had the result of frightening the mammals so that the latter forsook the neighbourhood and migrated from Spitzbergen to near that great bank of ice in the Greenland Sea. It was this which caused Spitzbergen to lose its flourishing existence. To bring the captured whales two thousand miles across such an ocean was impracticable: so, as the whale would not come to the furnaces, the furnaces had to be brought across to Greenland together with all the rest of the plant. Thus, as we have seen in Scoresby's voyaging, the vessels had to skirt the frozen icefields—and even anchor to this barrier —in order to capture the elusive mammoth of the sea.

So it was that by the end of the seventeenth century Spitzbergen, which had been discovered by Barentsz only a hundred years previously, had become practically denuded of whales. But in addition

to the other nations mentioned, the Russians also showed an interest in this means of wealth. It was in the year 1743 that, in spite of this diminished condition which had been reached, a vessel was sent out from Archangel whaling to Spitzbergen with a crew of fourteen hands, and had got within a couple of miles of the eastern side when suddenly their ship became surrounded by ice. The position became critical, and then four of them resolved to make for the shore leaping from one ice floe to the other. On land they found a ruined hut that had once been used by former whalers, and next day they were about to inform their shipmates when to their horror it was seen that the ship had disappeared. A heavy gale had dispersed ship and ice floes. Nor was she ever seen again.

Now these four men, left to their own resources, lived on that island for the next six years and three months. They had neither clock nor watch, nor navigational instrument, but they made a cross-staff and were able to take an altitude of the sun when it was visible. They succeeded in keeping such good reckoning of time that after all those months they were not more than four days out. On that craggy island, where there was not so much as a tiny tree, nor a blade of grass, three of the four men lived and survived. They had a gun and shot wild deer until their ammunition gave out. They then made themselves pikes out of some pieces of iron which they found, and thus killed an aggressive Polar bear whose flesh fed them, whose skin clothed them, from whose entrails the string was made to complete a bow which had been fashioned from a bit of wreckage that came ashore. Thus armed, they were able to fill their pantry with reindeer meat. One of the men did not die till the end of six years, and the three survivors then became despondent and

wondered how long it would be before they would be eaten up by the bears.

But then a marvellous thing happened on August 15, 1749; for to their utter amazement a ship was seen to seaward. These three men now set to work, lighted fires on the hills, hoisted a flag-staff with a reindeer's skin as flag, and thus attracted the ship, which came to anchor. Now the arrival of this vessel was miraculous, for she had encountered head winds, been unable to make her destination, and therefore altered course to East Spitzbergen just opposite to where these men happened to be. Then, after placing on board her reindeer fat, hides, fox skins, their bow, arrows, spears and lances made with their own hands, they were brought back to Archangel after having been long since given up for lost

It so happened, when this vessel came in, that the wife of one of these three survivors was standing by the water. Suddenly she recognized her long-bewailed spouse, and unable to wait till the ship was secured to the pier, the woman threw herself forward to embrace him, fell into the water, and was saved only with difficulty.

Who was the very first ever to catch a whale in northern waters it would be impossible to say. The Vikings, who colonized Greenland and afterwards withdrew, certainly hunted these mammals. In the early part of the eighteenth century the Esquimaux used to go whaling in their canoes, whose frames were made of wood or whalebone, covered over with the skin of seals except for a hole large enough to receive the steersman. Thus decked, these little craft used to go out with primitive harpoons pointed with teeth of walrus. To the barb was attached a thong, at the extremity of which was a bladder which served as a buoy. All that the hunter had to do was to get up to the whale, hurl this simple harpoon into

him and then leave the whale to tear about in his agony till he bled to death. The bladder-buoy indicated his position, and the creature was then towed ashore to be stripped, and thus there were food and light for another long winter's season.

CHAPTER III

WHALING ENTERPRISE

THE effect of over exertion in the Spitzbergen area had been to break up that sectional monopoly arranged between nations. The whale had gone elsewhere, the hunting was now of the free-for-all kind, and the scene had shifted to Greenland.

This free trade naturally caused a greater number of ships to be fitted out than before, both in Holland and England. In the latter country there had been formed "The Company of Merchants of London trading to Greenland" with a subscribed capital of £40,000, which was presently increased. But within less than a decade every penny was lost owing to bad management and lack of supervision. The eighteenth century was hardly a period of high ideals, and morality was at a pretty low ebb. Honour and trustworthiness were conspicuous enough by their absence. What then could you expect? If you sent men in such an age to the desolate regions of Greenland, at a fixed salary, without any interest in the business, and simply ordered them to get whales, how can you wonder if these men, far away from the vigilance of their owners, preferred to come ashore, hunt the deer and make themselves as comfortable as they could without chief consideration for the shareholders? They were sure of a certain pay whether they got a thousand whales or none. Thus it was that financial disaster came to the company, and by the irony of fate the last ship, after having made the really excellent catch of eleven whales, got wrecked.

But this unfortunate company's failure was of national importance, seeing that other countries were becoming rich by the industry. You will remember that this was a period of reckless finance. The wealth of the country was beginning to increase, thanks to overseas trade and the growth of the Mercantile Marine, principally in respect of the Honourable East India Company. But in those days investment was not easy, and it was difficult to get interest for one's savings. Then came the South Sea Scheme in 1720, and the resulting "Bubble," when sane men seemed suddenly to go mad, all save Walpole. The South Sea Company was dealt with leniently in the end, it was not even dissolved, and carried on a legitimate business. Turning its attention now to whaling, it placed a great deal of its capital in this enterprise; for the Government was encouraging, and exempted from all tax the produce of the country's whaling.

In the year 1725 the South Sea Compamy built a dozen fine large whalers, and gave them a thoroughly good equipment with all the necessary cordage, casks and gear. In the spring this squadron set forth and returned with only twenty-five whales, which hardly paid the cost of equipment. In 1730 twenty-two ships were sent out, but they returned with only a dozen whales, so that the loss this year was £9,000; and eventually after eight years the company had to give up whaling altogether. It was a sad blow to British enterprise, and the more so since it concerned the sea. The very existence of the nation during the next critical hundred years was to depend on ships and crews; whatever could be done by way of encouragement must be attempted, but who was likely to invest his money where so much had already been lost?

In 1732 the Government again tried to help, by

offering a bounty of twenty shillings a ton to every ship engaged in the whaling trade exceeding two hundred tons. This caused several private individuals to come forward, but the success was not great. In 1749 the dying industry was still further helped by increasing the bounty to forty shillings, and this made the undertaking worth while, so that three years later there were forty whalers sailing out, and their number even rose to eighty-two after still another three years had passed. That which was at the back of the Government was the value of whaling as a nursery for seamen, of whom the country possessed a comparatively small number. If crews could be trained in merchant ships, there was always at hand a large crowd which could be impressed for the ships of war.

But this bounty system, like all such arrangements, was an artificial stimulant; and it was very costly. Thus, when about £600,000 had been expended by 1769, it was thought that whaling was now able to support itself; so eight years later the bounty was reduced to thirty shillings. The effect of this was to show that the industry was not yet sufficiently strong to exist unsustained, for the number of ships dropped to about a third, and the forty shillings had to be granted as before. But by this time, as we have already seen in a previous chapter, the War of Independence had made a great difference, and British whalers were about to use the southern seas to great advantage. So well did whaling now prosper that in 1787 the bounty was able to be reduced to thirty shillings, and eight years later to twenty shillings, but still the industry went on increasing.

Thanks to American tuition at first, British sailormen now relearned the art which their forefathers had excelled in. Continental politics wiped out Holland as a rival in fishing and whaling for twenty

years, and this period was too long to allow of the old habits and the old Dutch whaling crews to return. The future, therefore, in respect of whaling lay between British and American ships until the firm establishment of steam vessels. And that which may be called the golden age of whaling followed during the next fifty or sixty years. We shall now be able, with this outline clear before us, to consider the whalers in far greater detail.

The building and fitting out of whaling fleets was no small matter, and it is a matter for deep regret that with the extermination of the Greenland right whale these fleets gradually diminished, and with them disappeared in time those fine builders of strong wooden ships. These artists of the adze must not be forgotten, for on them and the designers depended the very safety of the ships. These early nineteenth-century whalers no longer carried on their work in bays and on the outer rim of the icefields. Starting out early in the season, they would penetrate into the heart of the Arctic, and had to be able to withstand the crushing and collision by the ice pressure. Every whaler was of the nature of a discovery ship, specially strengthened externally by iron plates at the bows and hardwood sheathing, with stanchions and cross-bars inside the hull so as not to locate but spread the ice pressure over the whole construction.

Dundee became at last the final British whaling port as long as it was possible. Even after the Greenland industry fell on evil days, stout wooden whaling vessels were built at this port, and as late as the period 1893 to 1911 right whaling was still undertaken by an average of seven or eight vessels from here. By the year 1912 there was only a single whaler sailing out of here, and I believe that to-day Dundee commissions not even her. When Captain Scott's Antarctic Expedition of 1900–4 was being got ready

he had for this venture built the *Discovery* at Dundee, practically on the lines of a whaler. And for this purpose some of the veteran shipwrights came back to their old work in order to construct this special type of ship. No riveter of steel plates could have done the job.

On Derby Day, June 1910, I was on board Scott's last ship, the *Terra Nova*, and watched her start half an hour later from the Thames for his final expedition to the Antarctic. This auxiliary steamship was a genuine whaler, barque rigged, of 399 registered tons, built at Dundee in 1884 of wood by A. Stephen & Sons. That great whaling expert Scoresby used to recommend 350 tons as the most desirable size for a whaling ship on the grounds that its hold would normally be filled with whale produce, and it could carry the requisite crew and boats: but that it was usually difficult to fill a vessel of greater tonnage, and thus there would be empty, unearning space for the proprietor. The Dutch held the opinion that the ideal whaler should measure 112 ft. long, 29 ft. beam, and 12 ft. depth, carrying seven boats and about fifty men. The *Terra Nova*, which is representative of the finest achievement of the whaler after auxiliary steam had been introduced into these ships, measured 187 ft. long, 31.4 ft. beam, 19 ft. depth. The engines were placed right aft, the funnel abaft the main-mast, and the bows were specially strengthened. The modern steel-built steam whaler measures from 98 to 115 ft. in length over all, 18 to 22 ft. in beam, with moulded depth 11 to 12 ft. 9 in. But we shall deal with these in a special chapter.

Most noticeable, of course, in these old-time wooden whalers was the crow's-nest placed high up on the main topmast or t'gallant-mast. It was made of canvas or light wood, from which a careful look-out was maintained for the whales. Here, too,

the captain when farthest north would sometimes remain with spy-glass and speaking trumpet, conning the ship as in a temperature many degrees below freezing-point he watched the surrounding ice through which his vessel must needs thread her way. The Greenland whalers usually left their home port so as to make a departure from the Shetland Isles about the first week in April and arrive within the Polar Seas before the end of that month.

Scoresby's Land is still shown marked in modern maps of Greenland, and it was customary at one time for the whalers to spend a few weeks along this coast in what was known by the crews as the Seal-fishers' Bight. They would go farther north among the icefields a little later. But in the early nineteenth century it was the practice to sail straight away north without delay. Let us follow with them and see their methods, which are so different from modern whaling but resembled the custom of the South Seamen already noted.

Having once reached the Greenland icy seas, the seven boats were kept ready for immediate launching, and aloft a constant watch was kept for ice and whales. These boats, whose design can be traced right back to those early Viking craft, and is largely copied in the oared "whalers" of the Navy to-day, were 25 to 28 ft. long, and about $5\frac{1}{2}$ ft. in beam. Sometimes in rowing off to the unsuspecting whale a circuitous route was taken, and strict silence was maintained to prevent the mammal becoming alarmed. We mentioned on a previous page the importance of the harpoon-gun which was made in the year 1865. But even by 1830 a gun of sorts was in use, though not generally employed. When the first boat had got the harpoon fastened into the whale and the line was about to be run off entirely, the boat would signal to one of the other boats by

holding up one, two or three oars to indicate the need of more line.

The handling of the line once fast was the work of an expert, like the playing of a fish by a skilled angler. It had to be veered in such a manner that the bows of the boat were not pulled below the level of the water. And the turns round that bollard had to be done smartly without any bungling. The way the line went whirling round the bollard was likely to surprise a novice, and the friction was so severe that water had constantly to be poured over it to prevent it catching fire. So, also, the boat that was signalled to come along for his line to be bent had to be equally smart: for if it was not in time, then the first boat having come to the end, might be compelled to cut, and thus lose not merely the whale but harpoon and lines too.

The activity with which the city fireman to-day tumbles out and rushes to his fire-engine on the ringing of the bell was rivalled only in the old whaler days when the look-out from aloft had sighted a whale. The watch on deck would rouse those below by stamping with their feet and shouting "A fall! A fall!" This word was taken from the Dutch "val" meaning a whale. And out the men would tumble in their sleeping garments, with no time to dress, in spite of the atmosphere being well below zero. To a fresh hand this first experience was alarming, and he imagined that the ship was foundering.

These early nineteenth-century British whalers were self-contained without a shore station; and having caught the whale, his tail was pierced after death with two holes through which ropes were passed, and then the mammal was towed to the ship. He was secured alongside and then the flensing began. There is a Dutch word "spek," which means blubber or fat. And the leading hands in this flensing

operation were known as "speak koning" or blubber kings. Another important personage was the "speksioneer, "who directed the cutting. To each seaman the captain would go round with a dram of grog, giving a double allowance to the blubber kings and speksioneers. Under the direction of the last named the harpooners set to work with their blubber spades and great knives to make long parallel cuts, and the two kings on deck stowed the pieces in the hold, the carcase being turned round as convenient by blocks and the windlass. Of course as long as the station at Spitzbergen lasted all the oil was extracted ashore: but when the whale migrated to Greenland it was customary to take the blubber back to the home port.

The dangers to the Greenland whalers were increased by the fact that the cetaceans were mostly found on the very borders of the ice-barrier, and in the heyday of prosperity the wonderful sight of a hundred vessels has been seen along this ice-margin. Multiply this by the number of the boats, and you can picture what a sight it was in those latitudes with several hundred craft strung in a continuous line, making it almost impossible for any whale to escape: for he was hemmed in from diving below the ice and he was surrounded by boats as soon as he showed himself in the clear water. The height of the sport was when the ice was not solid but broken up into numerous small islands: for then the men would have to leap on to the frozen surface, run along with harpoon and lance, and attack in the opening whereever the whale came up to breathe. In such chases anything might happen before the whale was killed, possibly with the loss of a man or two. And then would come the difficult and arduous task of cutting the creature up small enough to be dragged across the ice to the ship.

But besides the Greenland whaling there was also the region of the Davis Straits which began to be hunted by the Dutch at the beginning of the eighteenth century and by the British ships somewhat later. The Davis Straits whaling was found very remunerative, but it was found also very dangerous, for many fine vessels got wrecked. In the year 1814 the British whaler *Royalist* was here lost with all hands, and three years later a similar disaster overtook the *London*. Icebergs, of course, were the great peril here.

Possibly no section of the Mercantile Marine ever ran so many continuous hazards as the whalers of the North. Quite apart from the usual perils of the sea were the special risks arising from boat-work, and the dangers to the ship itself in uncharted seas with bergs and ice of all kinds. Add to this the incessant bad weather with bitter cold, and you can appreciate that only tough, hard-case seamen were likely to make a second voyage. But those who persisted, after the manner of Scoresby, amassed such Arctic knowledge as would have filled a whole shelf full of books. Perhaps these men could hardly realize it at the time, but they were building up a national seamanhood whose descendants were to form the backbone of our steamship companies and trawler fleets. As to the value of these to a country we can wish for no better evidence than those long eventful years of the Great War, when troops and material were moved all over the seven seas, when thousands of mines were swept up and enemy submarines chased and sunk. It takes generations to build up a race of seafarers, but when once the tradition has been set going, when once it has become the thing for the son to follow in his father's steps aboard a vessel, you have one of the most valuable national possessions imaginable. And in those ports there

grow up a number of yards, with slips and docks, building better and better types of ships as the years go by. The whaling industry was certainly responsible for a great deal of good to Britain, quite apart from the amount of money obtained from the whale produce. And on the Atlantic coast of America, is it not true that the home ports of the whalers have always been those of the finest seamen in the country? Certainly it was the English colonists and their zeal for the Greenland fisheries which were responsible in that country at the first.

CHAPTER IV

FLUCTUATING FORTUNES

IN certain parts of the east and north-east coasts of Britain one still comes across old buildings, such as in King's Lynn, which remind us of their intimate connection with the Greenland whaling occupation of more than a century ago. Leaving in April, the ships would as a rule start back not later than August. But, just as the whale had migrated west from Spitzbergen after being mercilessly hunted, so that area between Spitzbergen and Greenland which the crews called the Greenland Sea had begun to show signs of thinning by the second decade of the nineteenth century.

And since the Davis Straits area was found to yield a more ample return, it was to this neighbourhood that the centre of interest now shifted gradually. This necessitated longer and therefore more costly voyages, and certainly far more dangerous. But the results were so good as to outweigh these drawbacks. Up to about 1820 three-fifths of the northern whalers were still using the Greenland Sea, and two-fifths were trying the Davis Straits. But ten years later there were not more than four ships fishing in the former, and thus we come to a fresh development in our subject. And here at last Government exploration was to do something for the fisherman. Strictly speaking, of course, the whale is not a fish: but by time-honoured custom generations of sailors, statesmen and others have spoken of the whale-*fisheries*, and with this proviso it is permissible so to refer to the matter.

In 1818 Ross's naval expedition went north through the Davis Straits and explored Baffin's Bay. With him went Parry, who was to make further Arctic voyages in the next and some subsequent years. So far as the whalers were concerned one important result from these Government expeditions was to make known a number of admirable localities which had previously been scarcely frequented. The first man to have discovered this bay, or rather sea, was William Baffin, who after going whaling in 1613–1614 off Spitzbergen, joined Captain Bylot in 1615 aboard the *Discovery* to look for the North-West Passage by Davis Straits. This passage was never discovered until in our own time when the 70-ton *Gjoa* set out from Christiania in 1903 and after three and a half years navigated safely that which had frustrated three centuries of seamen, and then arrived at San Francisco.

But if Baffin failed in his primary purpose he discovered and charted what we now call Baffin's Bay. His observations were discredited during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but were verified by Ross in 1818, and actually used by the Franklin expedition. It is a huge area over eight hundred miles long and about a third of that wide; and thanks to the information confirmed by Ross and Parry there was now available a whaling ground just at a time when it began to be needed most. So the whalers soon began sailing from the east and north-east coasts of Britain, usually in March, and crossed the Atlantic to the Davis Straits, and then till the beginning of May hunted the whale off the north coast of Labrador or by the mouth of the Cumberland Sound. This was known as the south-west fishery. They would next cross to the eastern side of Davis Straits and fish along the western side of Greenland: this being done, they moved further

up in July to Lancaster Sound and even to Barrow's Strait, which is right in the Arctic regions in lat. 74°N. On their way down Baffin's Bay they used to fish the western shore, especially at such places as Pond's Inlet and Home Bay. Three or four whales made quite a fair average catch in one season, but as many as nine were sometimes caught by one ship.

If a ship had been unlucky she might remain in Baffin's Bay as late as October looking for whales. The expression used by the crews when a vessel had captured none was to say she was "clean." Now one of these ships from Peterhead was clean on the last day of September, having been out all those months, but by October 27th she had caught five whales and got back to Peterhead with an average cargo. But the toll of losses in those lonely seas naturally mounted up. In the year following Ross's voyage there were lost up there ten whalers out of sixty-three. In 1821 eleven out of seventy-nine, and in the following year seven out of sixty whalers never came back. These disasters were brought about principally owing to having been crushed by the ice or squeezed out of the water on to the ice whilst trying to get across to Lancaster Sound.

Owing to the necessary doubling of the strength in building these northern whalers; owing also to their equipment of boats and cordage and casks and implements, the capital needed was greater than that for sending a merchantman to sea. On the other hand, no cargo was required to be taken out, no capital needed for purchasing homeward freights, for it was there in the sea for the asking. And in good seasons the reward was well worth the money expended. Moreover, if these staunch-built vessels could possibly avoid accidents, they were good for an exceptionally lengthy service. The initial cost of a 350-ton whaler varied in different decades. In 1813

the 354-ton *Esk* of Whitby, including the sum of £1,700 expended on her outfit for her first voyage, cost £14,000. Ten years later £10,000 would have covered the entire outlay, and by 1830 such a ship could have been provided for £8,000. Half the amount went to pay for the hull and spars: the balance being for sails, rigging, casks, line, and fishing gear. The sum of £1,700 just mentioned covered the provisioning, insurance, advance money to the seamen; but prices varied at different ports, Leith being cheaper than Aberdeen and Hull being the most expensive of all.

The master and harpooner received no pay but were wisely given a certain sum for every whale struck and for every tun of oil extracted. The seamen, in addition to their wages, were allowed a bonus if the voyage were prosperous. About the year 1830 quite one-third of British whaling belonged to Hull, and thirty-three whaling ships sailed out from the Humber that year to the Davis Straits. These averaged about 330 tons: but in this season, which was a very bad one, eight of the thirty-three came home "clean," that is to say, without having killed a whale, and six never came home at all, having been lost in the ice. Thus fourteen of the fleet failed to earn a penny dividend. The return on the owners' capital fluctuated in ninety years according to the market price of the oil: which was £18 a tun in 1742, £60 in 1813, but £24 in 1830. There was, therefore, always something of the gambling element in the whaler industry. It was only by an average number of seasons, and with fair luck in regard to sighting whales and avoiding ice, that such ships could ever be expected to pay their way.

On the other hand, a whaler might be fortunate beyond all expectation, as the Peterhead *Resolution*, which in 1814 made (including bounty) about

£11,000. Again, the personal practical knowledge and the skill of a good skipper had a lot to do with success. Scoresby's father in twenty-eight seasons brought home oil and bone to the value of £150,000 from the North. During the eighteenth century London had been the principal whaling port, but by 1830 there were only a couple of ships which used to leave the Thames for the northern whaling seas. Decentralization was going on and other ports, almost exclusively on the North Sea, were usurping this trade. The reason is not hard to find, for the two biggest ports of London and Liverpool were now concerned more with the vessels carrying cargoes to and from the Indies or America. Presently the China clippers and the Australian packets, and, later, the newly built ocean steamships, were to occupy the attention of these two ports. Thus in the year 1818 there were eight English whaling ports—Hull, London, Whitby, Newcastle being the principal—with Berwick, Grimsby, Liverpool, and Lynn all about equal, but Hull being far and away the leading centre. By 1830, however, when London owned only a couple of whalers, Liverpool had none and Lynn had none, nor had Grimsby any; Hull having thirty-three out of the total of forty-one. But in Scotland matters were different, and in 1818 Aberdeen was the chief whaling port, with Leith second, Dundee third, and Peterhead fourth. By 1830 Peterhead owned thirteen whalers, Aberdeen ten, Dundee nine, Leith seven: the other Scotch ports sending ships to this fishery being Burntisland (Firth of Forth), Greenock, Kirkcaldy, and Montrose.

Where the fortunes by whaling depended so entirely on the movements of the mammal, to say nothing of the sea's own perils, it was natural enough that not merely local but national enterprise should have varied from epoch to epoch. As I have shown

in another volume, the migration of the herring into the North Sea was responsible for bringing that wealth to Holland which enabled her to rise to the importance of a great sea power. In like manner the whale has played pranks in the careers of communities and individuals. And, without boring the reader too much, we may illustrate this by a few facts from history. Many people in our own time have often asked the question what is the practical good of all those Arctic and Antarctic expeditions which we have recently seen go forth. Apart from their exhibition of gallantry and endurance, what is likely to evolve for the good of the human race?

The answer is that a large mass of scientific data has been brought home, which may be of untold value at any future stage in the world's development. Exactly in what respect these facts can be applied cannot always be immediately apparent. But the demand for whale oil in modern social life, such as in soap-making, glycerine for explosives, and the manufacture of margarine, is likely to increase rather than otherwise. Now these expeditions have thrown light on the habits and the homes of the whales from which these essential products come, and the sending forth by the British Government of a further research expedition in 1925 is evidence of the economic belief in the whale's possibilities. The information which Ross and Parry were able to bring from Baffin's Bay largely revolutionized the industry, and there is no reason why the possession of the largest and best whaling steam fleet in the future may not be of the highest value to a country in need merely of those three articles alone, quite apart from the other products which are available. And in these days of many inventions who can limit the possibilities or foresee the value of this old-time pursuit? Who can say whither the whale

will wander? Where has he not wandered in the past?

We know from Hakluyt that already by the ninth century the Norwegians were hunting this animal off their coast. In the twelfth century whaling was being carried on in the North Sea off the east coast of Scotland, for Malcolm IV granted to Dunfermline Abbey one-tenth of all the whales and "marine monsters" which might be taken in the Firths of Forth and Tay: and in the following century Alexander II allowed half the blubber of these whales for providing the altar candles in that abbey. We know, too, that as early as 1575 the Basques used to hunt whales in the Bay of Biscay, and afterwards went north even to Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland, so that within twenty-five years it was no strange sight to find fifty or sixty Biscayan and Icelandish whalers at work in northern waters.

From 1598 Hull sent regularly for some years whalers to Iceland and the North Cape, and, after Hudson had rediscovered it, to Spitzbergen in the seventeenth century. It was from 1610 that the English syndicate known eventually as the "Russia Company" began. Two discovery ships, the *Marie Margaret* of 160 tons and the *Elizabeth* of 60 tons, were both lost, but a Hull ship managed to bring home the cargo. At that time, you see, whaling was like finding a gold mine. It was untapped wealth; the mammals had not been scared, and the rewards were immense. So, also, in 1594 an English whaling expedition had been sent from the west country to Cape Breton. There are references among the Pepysian manuscripts during the seventeenth century, too, in regard to English whalers proceeding for this purpose to Greenland seas.

But we see vessels being sent out from Bayonne, St. Jean de Luz, St. Sebastian, Bremen, Hamburg

and Amsterdam—in the latter case, of course, by way of the Zuyder Zee and the Texel. The importance of whaling to Holland rivalled that of the herring, especially during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and many people have failed to realize how for generations this helped to build up that country's wealth. If ever a nation raised itself by the sea it was the Low Countries, and the three main sources were—the herring fishery off their very coasts, the whale in northern waters, and the spice trade in the Dutch East Indies. Let us consider the whaling. In 1671 they sent no fewer than 155 vessels to Greenland which brought to Holland 630 whales' produce. During the years of 1672–4, until the signing of the Peace of London, they were so busy with naval operations that the whaling men could not be spared from the fighting fleet: but in 1675 there were 148 Dutch whalers at work, and that brief rest to the whale was rewarded by the ships bringing back the produce of 881 mammals. In some seasons they killed as many as 1,600 and even 2,000.

Now, unfortunately, the English had in the meantime allowed their rivals to go on helping themselves to these riches, and practically retired from the industry. This is just one of those intermissions which have characterized the occupation throughout its history. We alluded in a previous chapter to the sudden interest in the first quarter of the eighteenth century by the South Sea Company after the "Bubble" had burst. How this came about is as follows. It was Henry Elking who drew up a report for the Court of Directors of that company in the year 1722. At this time the Dutch were in practical possession of that trade which the English had at one time so enthusiastically pursued. Other nationalities were a bad second, but our forefathers had lost heart. Elking felt very deeply on the matter and submitted

his opinions to the Company plainly and with restraint.

"It will be found upon Examination," he wrote, "a very great Mistake, that the English cannot manage this Trade, which the Hollanders, Hamburgers, Bremers, French and Spaniards, all carry on to Advantage, and by which means they are made rich, even out of our Pockets, who sit still and buy those Goods of them for our ready money." Elking worked up the feelings of jealousy that all this wealth should be passing to our late enemies and sea-rivals. He contended, even, that whaling was more advantageous to the Dutch than were their East Indies, seeing that whaling took no money out of the country to purchase imports in the East, but brought home wealth without paying. It was the Dutch, let us remember, who had as recently as 1719 been the first to send whalers into the Davis Straits, and only two years later there were 355 foreign ships at work on these plentiful grounds. Why should the English be so despondent and unenterprising when the Dutch and other seamen were enriching themselves?

Elking made out a strong case, claiming that English-built ships if more costly were stronger and lasted longer. In Holland living and labour were cheaper than with us, and so vessels could be built more inexpensively. But, on the other hand, the Dutch whalers had to import many of their skippers, harpooners, steersmen for the boats, and even seamen from such localities as Jutland, Holstein, Scotland, Norway, Bremen and Friesland. These were taken on for the season and then returned to their homes. Numbers of Englishmen had also served in these Dutch whalers, and were quite as expert as their employers. This lull which had been going on in English whaling enterprise since the last quarter

of the seventeenth century was most unfortunate for England.

What was the kind of craft to employ? Elking considered that the most suitable whalers were fly-boats, cats or hagboats; "and should be very strong built, and doubled at the Bow, to resist the Shocks of the Ice." The size varied from 200 to 500 tons, the former carrying four boats and twenty men and boys, while the latter had seven boats with a crew of fifty men and boys. The complement of a 300-ton whaler at that time with six "shallops" as they used to call the boats, consisted of one chief harpooner who was the whaling expert in command of the whole expedition; one master of the ship, five other harpooners, six boat-steersmen, six "managers of the Lines," one surgeon, one boatswain, one carpenter, two coopers, sixteen "common sailors" and two or three boys: total, forty-two or forty-three to the ship.

These ships were worked in three watches, except that when a whale was sighted all hands were called. When the ship reached the ice-barrier she was anchored to the ice by a great "nose-hook." The word "cachalot" was introduced by the French fishermen, the English whalers employing the word "pot-fish" or spermaceti fish. But though there was some sort of whaling industry off the east coast of Scotland in the early seventeenth century, and a hundred years later it extended north from the Orkneys, yet it had become unprosperous and languished as in England. But the revival of British whaling dates from 1725, when the South Sea Company, convinced by Elking's arguments, sent their dozen ships which they had caused to be built specially on the Thames for this northern trade. They were each of about 300 tons, and at Deptford a wet dock was reserved for them, where also the boiling houses were erected for extracting the oil.

The unhappy result of this South Sea Company's northern whaling adventure we have already observed. But the fact remains that the Dutch and foreign monopoly was from now seriously contested. There were periods of depression and despondency again, but the bounty offered by the Government saved the industry from dying a natural death. Thus if we take the year 1788 we find that, in spite of everything, British whaling had been so resuscitated that 255 vessels of under 300 tons were now sailing north from London, Hull, Liverpool, Whitby, Newcastle, Yarmouth, Sunderland, Lynn, Leith, Ipswich, Dunbar, Aberdeen, Bo'ness, Glasgow, Montrose, Dundee, Whitehaven, Stockton, Greenock, Scarborough, Grangemouth, Queensferry, and even from Exeter.

A great recovery had been made and this list of ports shows how universal was the interest now taken. The founding of the Dundee Whale Fishing Company at this time was to give that town a special importance which was to last for several generations. For it was the introduction of steam into the Dundee whalers during the year 1858 which was to alter the whole future of whaling. At the close of the eighteenth century the manufacture of jute had been introduced to British industrialists, though it was a long time before it became popular. About the year 1850, after being introduced to Dundee for less than twenty years, jute manufacturing in that town became extensive, and it was the large consumption of whale oil required in the jute fabrication which gave to Dundee the leading position in that trade. Thus it was that the building of whaling ships so long survived at this Scotch port.

CHAPTER V

IN THE DAVIS STRAITS

THE Government bounty to encourage British whaling ceased in 1824; the wealth which was coming in exceeded that of the Dutch even in the latter's most prosperous year, and there seemed every likelihood of the pursuit becoming most satisfactory. The produce in 1814 obtained from Greenland and Davis Straits had amounted to over £700,000, but this was an exceptionally good year. In 1829 the figure had dropped to about half that, but the price of oil had also fallen. In addition, about £50,000 must be added for the revenue from that newer South Seas fishing.

It was in that year there occurred an incident in the Davis Straits which well illustrates the keenness and even the jealousies among the whalemen. The date was August 23, 1829, and five or six boats of the Peterhead whaling ship *Traveller* were at work in the straits when one of the boats harpooned a whale. Away darted the monster, so that the *Traveller's* boat was quickly coming to the end of her line. The "foregoer" or "foreganger" had been hove over by the harpooner, a turn had been taken round the "billet head" or bollard, and the usual signal indicating to the rest of the fleet that a whale had been struck was made, and the jack hoisted. That line was revolving round the bollard at such a rate that smoke was issuing with the friction.

Of the boats in the vicinity, that of the whaler *Princess of Wales* from Aberdeen came alongside the

Traveller's boat in friendly fashion, as was the custom among whalers, and bent her line to the line of the *Traveller's* boat. Eventually the whale diminished his fury and was approached, but now a boat from the barque *Thomas*, owned by the Dundee Union Whale Fishing Company, came up and also harpooned the animal, which at once made off with such rapidity that one of the men in the *Traveller's* boat was thrown under the thwart. The going was terrific, for this boat encountered in its course an ice floe and several of the men had to leap out and guide the craft past lest it should be smashed to pieces: in fact, the pace was so fast that some of the hands were left behind on the ice. A third turn had to be taken round the bollard, but still the whale rushed on.

It was about this time that a second harpoon from the *Traveller's* boat got home, making three in all, and finally the whale was killed. But then came a squabble, for the men in the *Traveller's* boat naturally claimed the catch as theirs, but the *Thomas's* boat violently opposed this and demanded the prize for themselves. In fact they were so determined and threatening that the *Traveller's* men had to withdraw and watch the other people tow it away. But the matter did not end there, and the case came on for trial in Edinburgh during the following March, when Joseph Hutchinson and other Peterhead merchants, owners of the *Traveller*, brought an action against the Dundee Union Whale Fishing Company. There was never much doubt as to the result, and the *Traveller's* owners were awarded the sum of £600, which was the agreed value of the whale.

The year 1830 stands out as one of the most disastrous years which ever happened to British whaling. After the Greenland Sea had been mostly fished clean, the grounds used by the whalers had

been shifted chiefly to the entrance of Davis Straits. This was known as the South-West fishery. But in course of time this, too, had become fished out and the whales had departed for more distant corners of the Arctic. The information brought home by Ross and Parry that whales had been seen in large numbers further up Baffin's Bay, and on the north-west side, naturally soon attracted the ships to those remote latitudes. At the same time a much greater degree of risk was undertaken by reason of the ice, for at the beginning of the season the ice comes floating down from the north.

The whalemen's custom was to take their ships up the eastern side of Baffin's Bay past the rocky promontory marked as the Devil's Thumb, and across that mighty Melville Bay where the snow and ice perpetually cover the lofty shore. It was into this bay that the south-west wind blew the loosened fragments of the barrier ice, which, unable to find an outlet from this lee shore, created a tremendous danger to shipping. In this year 1830, then, the whalers had left their British ports by the end of March, but owing to head winds did not reach the entrance to Davis Straits till the end of April. The sea this year was beautifully open as they made their way up the eastern side of Baffin's Bay, sighting very few whales.

Above Disko Island the ice delayed them a week, but at last the fleet of fifty sail reached the opening of Melville Bay on June 10th, about a month earlier than usual. From now on there follows a series of incidents so thrilling and amazing that imagination could hardly invent happenings more astounding: the record is more like a chapter out of a boy's adventure story. For the south-west wind had crowded Melville Bay with ice floes so that whichever way those whalers looked it was an alarming sight.

What was to be done? The hope was to find an opening to the westward and thus gain the intended fishing ground; and, as a fact, an opening was discovered. Whaler captains, like all fishermen, were in keen competition the one against the other, and every ship knew that the first to get through this ice to the open water stood the best chance of reaching the whales first. Thus it was that the *St. Andrew* of Aberdeen wriggled her way through, and she was followed by twenty-two more. The rest of the fleet were coming along, too, but now the ice closed and made an impenetrable bulkhead between the first twenty-three and the rear, which tried independently but ineffectually to get through.

With the *St. Andrew* were the *Baffin* and *Rattler* of Leith, the *Eliza Swan* of Montrose, the *Achilles* of Dundee, and the French whaler *Ville de Dieppe*. On June 19th there sprang up a fresh S.S.W. gale which piled the masses of ice against them. The sight of these six vessels with their heavy-built hulls and great yards against the white ice hemming them in, unable to proceed further, was impressive as a picture but indicative of future destruction. However, the little squadron had taken what shelter they could under the lee of a large floe and in water that barely floated them. They had also hauled themselves so close in single line ahead, bow to stern, that it was possible to walk along the six decks continuously.

And then on the night of June 24th the sky became black, the gale worked up to its full anger, and the ice began pressing against the ships terribly. In order to relieve this pressure, hands were set sawing the ice so as to form a wet dock, but soon came a great floe which nothing could withstand. Lifting up the *Eliza Swan*, the floe hurled her against the *St.*

Andrew's bow with such force as almost to wrench the former's mizzen mast out in the ship: and then the floe passed from under, damaging both stem and keel. It next struck the *St. Andrew* amidships, snapping about twenty of her timbers, and then passing along the line dashed against the *Baffin*, *Achilles*, *Ville de Dieppe* and *Rattler* with such energy that within fifteen minutes these four strongly built, specially fortified whalers designed for Arctic work were for the most part converted into mere fragments of wood.

With the grinding of the merciless ice and the crunching of stout timbers; the shouts of the deep-throated men; the snapping of thick masts; the crashing of yards; the howling of that bitter gale over the icy white expanse, there was enough going on to unnerve most people. Suddenly made homeless, many of these seafarers were but lightly clad and just able to leap on to the frozen surface. The *Ville de Dieppe*, partly filled with water, was the least unfortunate, for she touched bottom, remained upright during the next fortnight, and from her were salved stores and provisions. Some were also taken from the *Baffin*, and boats were hauled on the ice to form some sort of shelter.

We mentioned just now the *Princess of Wales*, belonging to Aberdeen. This whaler, together with the *Resolution* of Peterhead, the *Laurel* of Hull, and the *Letitia*, also of Aberdeen, had been able to get further to the north-west, and cut out for themselves a wet dock in the ice. They were lying side by side and imagined themselves quite safe, but this gale drove the floes against them, piercing the hulls of *Resolution* and *Letitia*, filling them with the sea. The *Laurel* was lying between them and was so compressed as almost to be raised out of the water: but for a while she remained, and quickly provisions

and stores were placed aboard her from the two wrecked whalers. On the 2nd of July, however, the gale seemed to be worse than ever, and within ten minutes the *Laurel* and also the *Hope* of Peterhead were destroyed. But we have not yet completed the list.

Other whalers of the twenty-three had penetrated in their eagerness further north, even as far as lat. 76°. Among these were two ships, the *Spencer* and *Lee*, of which the latter escaped with only shattered timbers, whilst the former had filled and become a complete wreck. The Whitby *William and Ann* was crushed to pieces quickly, the *Dordon* of Hull was raised up by the ice into safety, and the *Old Middleton* of Aberdeen was wrecked. So also of those which had remained south of the ice barrier, many encountered disaster, but thus far not one officer or man out of the whole fleet had been lost. Some had narrow escapes in reaching the ice, some even found themselves in the water before they could get time to snatch a few clothes. And then on that glacial surface a thousand seafarers set to work making themselves as comfortable as they could with bits of sail as tents. Anyone who has ever been associated with shipwrecked sailors knows how adaptable they are to sudden changes of circumstances: how they will even joke and magnify any element of happiness that remains. Nor were these whaler-men any different. They had been accustomed to cold and the rigours of northern fishing, some of them for twenty or thirty years. Tough, hard-case, plucky, ignorant of most things except their seamanship and their whaling; rough, chafing against discipline, easily tempted by a drop of alcohol, they were a strange crowd to be responsible for, on that ice, beyond the immediate control of their officers.

Some of these sailors rejoiced that for once they

were independent beings, free from having to obey. Others treated the affair as a holiday: but certain of them got hold of the salved wine and spirits and became drunk. What with this newly sprung canvas village, the roisterous alcoholic shouts of the British, the singing and dancing of the French, no wonder that the wags named it Baffin's Fair. There were really two villages, in fact, that of the wrecked ships which had got north of the barrier, and that of the vessels which had foundered to the south. Between the two there was such regularity in communication that the southerners used to call it the "north mail." Possibly there was more to drink in that southern section.

But presently the deaths began to happen: some through exposure and cold and fatigue, but some through too much alcohol, tumbling into the holes of the ice intoxicated. On the whole, however, the discipline was not bad. The third week of July passed, the *St. Andrew* with the *Eliza Swan* and other ships at the northern end tried to get away to the westward, and their crews towed the ships through gaps. But some of these vessels were so unlucky as to be driven still further north even above lat. 76° 2′ and the men employed their time catching a few whales and dragging them through the holes. It was not till September 10th that they succeeded in making open water: though others had got clear a week or two sooner. The most depressing sight was when a certain Greenock ship was thoroughly ice-surrounded and she watched other vessels one by one move away out of their icy fastness. The captain died and the mate began to despair of ever getting the ship clear till the following year. The latter thereupon took one of the boats with a dozen men and left the ship to look for some of the Danish settlements.

But, after the mate had gone, the ice began to

move, and after a few hours' sawing, the ship found herself in fairly clear water. The position now was this. There were on board not merely the ship's own crew, but those of the wrecked *Princess of Wales* and of the *Letitia*. But the last of the officers had gone away in the boat, taking with him the charts and log-glasses; yet still the crew decided to carry on. For about a week this vessel, whose name was *John*, was navigated cautiously, anchoring every night. But then the crew became emboldened, and one night the watch on deck sighted a line of breakers, but he came to the conclusion that it had been caused only by a stream of ice: so no alteration in course was made. The next thing was that the *John* was ashore, and although built of teak she was a total wreck by the morning. Fortunately there were sighted the *Eliza Swan* and the *Duncombe* of Hull, who picked up the crew and brought them safely home.

The net result of this season's disaster to the whaling fleet in the Davis Straits was the loss of twenty fine ships belonging to Hull, Aberdeen, Leith, Dundee, Peterhead, Whitby, Montrose, Greenock and Dieppe. The news reached Peterhead and Hull in October by returning ships lucky enough to have survived. Throughout these fishing towns the effect was pathetic. Financially the loss of these nineteen British whalers, and the cost of repairing twelve which were damaged, the details as to wages, stores and so on, amounted to over £142,600, quite apart from the failure to bring home that produce which they were sent to fetch. Thus the total loss this season was close on £300,000. And having regard to the value of money a hundred years ago, these figures are extremely significant. Whaling had begun to be a prosperous concern, the bounties had been discontinued, the Baffin's Bay area had seemed

to hold out excellent prospects. But such a universal disaster as this to nine of the principal ports was such that many were disinclined to risk their savings in such ventures again. The industry fell on bad times, the shock had been too heavy, and by the year 1849 there were only fourteen British whalers at work. But it was the United States of America which especially kept the occupation going, for in this last-mentioned year that country possessed 596 whaling ships of 190,000 tons manned by 18,000 sailors. Having regard to the English pioneer work in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the vast sums of money which had been expended, the enormous bounties, and the years of persistent effort, the condition to which British whaling had descended was thoroughly disheartening. Gradually the northern grounds became deserted, and attention was turned more and more to those southern seas about which Burke in the previous century had spoken with such eloquence. The last voyage to Arctic seas had by no means been made, but various efforts were taken to find the whale in areas of the world less forbidding than those which had brought such disaster and financial loss.

But even outside the Arctic regions British whaling was to be spasmodic rather than regular both as to area and continuity. It was Captain Cook who in 1775 first reported whales in the southern seas, and then the American and British whalers began their profitable voyages thither. But in the year 1833 there sailed from London the 300-ton whaler *Tuscan* for a three-year whaling voyage round the world, and in her was allowed to travel as passenger a surgeon named F. D. Bennett, who was a Fellow both of the Royal College of Surgeons and of the Royal Geographical Society. This scientist went in order to study the anatomy and habits of the southern

whales and the mode of conducting the sperm-whale fishery—a subject which up till then had not been touched in our literature. He has described the South Sea whaling ship and the life on board so well that we may first look at the vessel through his eyes.

CHAPTER VI

THE OLD WHALE-SHIPS

"IN external appearance," says Bennett, "the South-Seaman is principally distinguished from the ordinary merchant-ship by the number and form of her boats; by the presence of some short spars, affixed to one of her sides, to protect the hull when the blubber is being removed from the whale to the deck; and, when cruising, by her lofty spars being down, her sail shortened, and her mastheads manned. Interiorly, one side of the deck, at the waist of the ship, has a platform, or covering of planks, to receive the more bulky parts of the whale, taken on board: an extent of 10 ft. of the corresponding bulwark being adapted for temporary removal, to facilitate that object. To the head of the mainmast are attached pulleys ('cutting-blocks and falls') which communicate with the windlass, and which are employed to raise the blubber, during the flinching of a whale. But the most conspicuous and peculiar object on the deck is the edifice called the 'try-works,' and used for boiling the oil. This is a square building, 10 ft. in length by 5 ft. in height, extending across the deck, a short distance behind the foremast, and constructed of firmly cemented bricks, and strengthened with iron. Its summit is flat, and excavated for chimneys, as well as for the reception of two iron cauldrons, or 'try-pots,' beneath each of which there are corresponding furnaces. The entire fabric is based upon a cistern of water; and an additional sheathing yet further protects the deck

from the effects of intense heat. Each boiler, or 'try-pot,' is large enough to contain 136 gallons of oil, and communicates, by a spout, with a large copper cooler, placed on the corresponding side of the works. This building, which is erected on the deck previous to the ship leaving her port, is retained only until the cargo is complete, or whaling relinquished, when the whole is broken up."

Of course she went to sea with plenty of casks, some of which for convenience in stowage were in packs ready to be put together as required. Others were filled with fresh water and served as ballast. Four iron tanks, usually fixed between decks, could also carry oil. In a South-Seaman the total number of officers and men was about thirty and consisted of master, surgeon, mates, boat-steerers or harpooners, boatswain, carpenter, cooper (for constructing the barrels), armourer and steward. The boat-steerers were petty officers, holding rank between the mates and the able seamen: their duties being to steer the respective boats, look after the equipment and harpoon the whale. In most cases captain and crew depended for their pay on the profits of the voyage, or received as wages a share of the cargo's value when the latter reached London. A South-Seaman's crew sailing out of that port received among themselves a third or a fourth of the cargo's realization; the residue being divided up among the owners and for the cost of the voyage. The captain received from an eleventh to a fifteenth share, whilst an able seaman usually got a one-hundred-and-sixtieth.

Fully provisioned for three years with everything of the best, there were very keen competition and much secrecy. But if two whalers happened to sight each other on a cruising ground each scrutinized the other to ascertain whether he had recently cap-

tured whales. The practised eye could tell by glancing up at the cutting-falls; and if there remained any bits of a whale's skin in the strands, it was known well enough that whales were not far away. Considerable latitude and discretion were allowed by owners to the masters as to where they should go. Obviously, as every captain was financially interested, it was to his benefit that he should voyage where the chances were best. Thus, some ships would go round the Horn to the South American coast, thence westward along the neighbourhood of the Equator towards Japan, thence back across the Pacific to work the Mexican and Californian seas. Others would prefer sailing round the Cape of Good Hope to Indian waters, whilst some small American whalers confined themselves to the North Atlantic, especially off the African coast, the Western Isles, and Equator, with great success.

It is customary to see in an old whaler's log-book or journal the entry of the day's work preceded by the figure of a whale's head if a sperm whale were sighted that day. If, however, whales had been captured, you find as many flukes sketched erect as there had been mammals caught. In the case of a whale found dead, and taken, the fluke in the book was shown reversed. This was the British custom. In American journals the capture of a whale was shown by a sketch of the mammal in the left-hand column. If there were also a sketch of a ship in that margin, it denoted that a vessel had been sighted that day. Thus, there was a kind of primitive visual method of logging events.

As to the gear of the British whaling ships, their boats were necessarily of very great importance. Double-ended, steered not by a rudder but by an oar on the port side secured by a grommet, the steering oar was very long and needed a thoroughly

experienced man. These boats were from 27 to 30 ft. long and 4 or 5 ft. broad, of not more than ½ in. planking. The double-ended design was not merely for weatherly qualities but so that the boat could be rowed as easily stern first as bow first. Speed, handiness and buoyancy were the main features aimed at. The reason for these qualities will best be appreciated from actual incidents.

Thus, while cruising, the whale-ship *Tuscan* one day sighted on her voyage out in the Atlantic a school of small whales. Boats were lowered away as quickly as possible in pursuit, and three whales were soon harpooned. One of these mammals escaped by the harpoon drawing, a second sank immediately after death, the third, however, was captured, brought back to the ship and taken on deck. It measured only 16 ft. and produced about thirty gallons of oil. That was a comparatively easy catch. But on another occasion the same ship sighted quite a number of cachalots moving so rapidly to windward that the oared boats were unable to get near them. On a third occasion a couple of whales were harpooned in the midst of a school, but one of the boats whose harpoon had penetrated the mammal was, whilst securing the victim, so severely lashed by the flukes of another whale that the officer and harpooner were both thrown into the sea. Fortunately the rest of the crew had the presence of mind to cut the rope, and the harpooned whale was allowed to escape in order to rescue the two shipmates. But the boat was too badly damaged to be of further service. The second whale, after being harpooned, "sounded" to the depth of a tub and a half of line, then rose fiercely to the surface of the sea and went off, towing the boat in a wild, mad fury to windward. Before long two other boats had succeeded in getting their harpoons into the beast, but the whale still continued

its pace alive, and could not be killed by nightfall: so, in spite of all their efforts, the boats had to cut their lines and return to the ship unrewarded.

Often it was merely the handiness and good oarsmanship which saved the men from disaster. On one occasion four of the boats were launched after sighting a school of sperm whales, and three boats made their captures satisfactorily. But the fourth cachalot was of the dangerous fighting type and as mad as a Spanish bull. This young male had been pierced by a couple of harpoons, but was in no mood to start flight as desired. Instead, he attacked his attackers and rushed his head towards the boat. By clever steering and hard rowing this onslaught was evaded, but the whale next tried to crush the boat with his jaws, turning on his back. The reception of a lance wound negatived this effort by causing him to close his mouth. But the monster was still determined and struck the boat with such a blow that it was nearly overturned, and then he drove his jaw clean through the boat's planking. Of course the water came rushing in, and only by lashing the oars across the gunwale could the half-immersed crew remain. The harpoon line was quickly cut and the monster was allowed to escape. Scarcely visible in the waves, the men were eventually picked up by the other boats and taken aboard the ship, which came bearing down to them.

Yes: whaling, especially when there was any sea running, was always more or less risky, and there was no telling what might happen, any more than the toreador knows what his animal is about to perform. There was the instance when three boats had each harpooned a whale, while the fourth had got his weapon into an adult bull whale. The latter now went tearing along towing the fourth boat, but the

line crossed that of another whale already made fast, and so drew the second boat towards the bull, which struck it a blow with his flukes. This capsized the boat, keel uppermost, so that the crew were swimming about or supporting themselves with the oars. Thereupon the men in the boat which had been engaging the bull had to cut the harpoon line and rescue their friends.

Fortunately the capsized boat was undamaged and soon righted and emptied. There followed another exciting chase after the bull, which was so strenuous and fast that the boats soon got out of sight from the ship. Finally, by the greatest exertion the oarsmen overtook the bull, managed to secure the line which was trailing astern from the whale, made fast to this, got right up to the bull and finally captured him. It had been a long and thrilling day which did not end till ten that night, when all the cachalots were brought back to the ship and afforded 116 barrels of oil. Sometimes these incidents resulted in fatal termination to men's lives: but in any case it was only the fine boatmanship and cool heads which enabled them to win through.

Besides the steering, there were five other oars, fifteen feet in length and named respectively harpooner, bow, midship, tub and after oar. The rowlocks were muffled with mats, and in order to secure the oars across the gunwales when the boat was shattered and sinking, lifelines were attached to the sides, the steering oar being lashed in the centre. In the bow was a small platform, sunk below the level of the gunwale, named the "box," with a thighboard to receive the lower extremities of the harpooner as he stood to hurl his harpoon or his lance. At either end of the boat mats were spread to afford a firmer footing to steersman and harpooner, the former also having a small platform. Axes and knives

were placed ready for use to cut the line whenever necessary.

In the bows were placed a couple of harpoons and a couple of lances, with reserves in other parts of the boat. The line had to be coiled carefully in tubs which were placed on the floor between the seats. This line led through a deep groove lined with lead, at the stem. Aft it led to a stout pillar or bollard called a "loggerhead," which was used to take the strain when the line had been secured to the whale. Woe betide any man if that line got foul whilst it was running out at such furious pace! In each boat were provided a mast and sail, kegs of fresh water, drogues of wood sometimes fastened to the harpoon line so as to hinder the whale's progress; and whifts of small coloured flags in order to buoy the dead whale so that it could easily be sighted.

There is an old chantey[1] which used to be sung by the British whalers who were engaged in the Greenland industry, which relates the operations of the whaler and the work of the boats in several verses. Two of them run as follows:

> We struck that whale, the line paid out,
> But she gave a flourish with her tail;
> The boat capsized and four men were drowned,
> And we never caught that whale, brave boys,
> And we never caught that whale.
>
> "To lose the boat," our captain said,
> "It grieves my heart full sore;
> But oh! to lose four gallant men,
> It grieves me ten times more, brave boys,
> It grieves me ten times more."

Mr. Arthur C. Watson, who recently published in the American monthly *Yachting* some interesting extracts from the journal of Captain Ephraim Harding

[1] Reproduced in *Roll and Go*, by J. C. Colcord. Boston, 1924.

of the whaling ship *Arab*, gives the following entry under the date of Thursday, June 15, 1843. It should be mentioned that the island of Johannah was at the northern end of the Mozambique Channel.

"At 4 p.m. sent the boat in. Saw the *Sally Ann* of New Bedford and the *Bengal* lying there. Captain Borden, of the *Sally Ann*, after leaving here some days previous on a cruise for whales, fell in with them to windward of this island. He lowered his boats in pursuit, and after chasing them for several hours, came up with them. In the act of striking the whale, he received a blow on his legs from the whale's flukes, which broke them both. His right leg was broken in two places below the knee, and the upper bone of his left leg was broken. He immediately left the whales and came on board the ship, crowded on all sail for this place, where he arrived in fifteen hours after the accident. He immediately had assistance from an English doctor who was on board a vessel here. He is now getting along well."

The British South-Seamen whaling ships usually carried four boats suspended over the sides of the vessel, their keels resting upon iron cranes. These boats were stationed on the quarter, or waist, or bow of the ship, and were commanded by the master and the three mates. When the boats were launched, the captain of the boat took his place aft with the steering oar, whilst the harpooner rowed the foremost oar: but when the assault on the whale commenced, these two officers usually exchanged stations. The whaling boats were capable of carrying twelve people, so that they could always go to the rescue of a second boat and then continue after the whale. Few sports or occupations connected with the sea could afford more thrilling, wholesome excitement than was found in these nice-lined craft. Manned with a sturdy, tough, hard-case crew full of the

experience of many a chase, it was a real man's life for those who were happy roving and roaming all over the oceans. No one but a real sailorman could have endured it otherwise. Bennett, the ship's surgeon, wrote of the oared whale-boat with enthusiasm and referred to her as "swift and handsome," "buoyant and graceful in her movements, she leaps from billow to billow, and appears rather to dance over the sea than to plough its bosom with her keel."

But besides the fine seamen and the good boat, the harpoon line had to be of the best possible cordage that could be manufactured. Tarred hemp was selected, two-inch, three-stranded and extremely strong, the complement for each boat being 220 fathoms, so that when the whale got away with the harpoon in him there might be as much as a quarter of a mile of line rushing through the sea and then the boat at the end of that. Coiled with great care in two tubs in one long continuous line, each end was kept exposed so that one end was ready to be attached to the harpoon, while the other with a spliced loop could be connected with the line of a second boat, should the entire length need to be increased. And every additional fathom of course meant further drag through the water for the whale to pull.

The harpoon was three feet long, arrow-shaped, made of the finest wrought iron and fixed to a heavy pole, five feet long. A dexterous throw would plant this weapon up to its socket into the mammal and would hold so tenaciously that when the whale was finally dead and the harpoon withdrawn it would sometimes be found to have been twisted throughout. The lance was kept keenly sharpened for destroying the harpooned whale, and was secured to the boat by a seven-fathom line and stick. The

skill lay in quickly darting and withdrawing it from the whale, sometimes killing the creature by a single wound at a vital spot. The instrument used for separating the blubber from the whale and cutting it into suitable portions was called a spade, being made of a triangular steel plate and very sharp.

So much, then, for the ships, their boats and equipment. Let us now get a close insight into the technique which had to be employed before the whale could be captured.

CHAPTER VII

"THERE SHE BLOWS!"

WITH a careful look-out being maintained from the masthead, the ship was at all times ready to lower boats and begin. But there were signs which indicated that the whales could not be far away. Such items as floating pieces of cuttle-fish, or oily tracks left by the recent passage of cetaceans, caused the look-out man to be doubly watchful. But such obvious phenomena as a whale spouting summoned every man to eager activity. "There she blows!" would go up the cry, "there again!"

And then within a couple of minutes would be the boats properly manned and pulling to windward. If the whales were to leeward, then the boat would also hoist sail to run down. The whale-ship herself remained directing operations from her masthead by an arranged code of signals. And now watch the harpooner. Standing in the bow of the boat, he waited until he was in a favourable position to strike. The first harpoon was followed by the second immediately afterwards. At first the whale in his painful shock would take violent plunges, throwing his dangerous flukes high in the air, lashing the sea till it obscured the men and threatened to overwhelm them.

After that the animal would begin tearing along the surface of the water at a great pace, towing the boat after him, oars "apeak"—that is to say, resting at an acute angle with the gunwale, ready for use. The line secured to the loggerhead, the boat, down

by the stern as the bow rose over the sea, went crashing, leaping, thudding over the waves and throwing the spray to port and starboard. There was never anything like that till the coming of the fast motor-boat days. A stern wave, high above the gunwale's level, threatened every moment to rush down into the little craft. Harpooner and steersman now changed places, and the lance was ready to give the knock-out blow as soon as the boat could be hauled up close enough to the whale.

But then the whale would get the notion to "sound," or dive straight down deeply, only to reappear: whereupon the boat approached and the lance attack went on until the creature was surrounded by a crimson sea. And then through sheer feebleness he seemed to be dying, until, in a final flurry, he started off again towing the boat at an exciting speed, lashing the waves with his tail, steering all over the sea. But then death would come, and the great, inert mass would lie like a billowed rock at the mercy of his captors. Sometimes these boats would rush into action with sail still set and not lower away until the harpoon had got deep into the whale. But there was a whaleman's expression "to be gallied," meaning to be alarmed; sometimes the school of whales became so "gallied" that they would all make off, or dive for a time, not showing themselves till a long way ahead and in a totally different direction—after the manner of tactics which enemy submarines sometimes employed during the war.

A female cachalot or a young male usually took out not more than a tub and a half of line, though an adult was known to sound so deeply that he needed three continuous lines. Sometimes, though not frequently, the whale was killed immediately by the harpoon, or by a single lance-blow. There

was a certain amount of luck in finding the sperm whale, as in any other pursuit. The American whaling ship *Arab*, which left Fairhaven in the fall of 1842, had been at sea about a year, sailed 20,000 miles, crossing the North and South Atlantic and the Indian Ocean, and during the whole of that voyaging had never once seen so much as the spout of a sperm whale, only to find the latter in plenty off the coast of Arabia, in one day killing as many as nine, and on another seven. "There she breaches!" would go the glad cry, "there she blows!" But then for several ensuing months sperm whales would not be seen again, and the ship would be compelled to sail to another part of the globe, only to find that a large number of other whaling vessels were already cruising in that area.

During those voyages dogged by weeks and months of ill-luck, everyone on board from the skipper downwards was feeling in a state of perpetual irritation as one whaling ground after another was tried unsuccessfully. The Azores, the Crozets, Tristan da Cunha, Madagascar, Ceylon and other equally distant localities would be visited with heart-breaking failure. Sometimes whales would be sighted at dusk but missed at daylight. Then there would be days of bad weather, the ship labouring heavily, injuring those useful boats badly. Captain Harding of the *Arab* mentioned in his journal that on July 22nd the gale had been blowing continuously for twenty-five days.

The result of this kind of seafaring was that the men deserted often at the very first opportunity, and for that reason stringent precautions were taken to prevent them getting ashore. The ship would therefore usually avoid inhabited islands, but on some lonely atoll the men would be allowed shore leave for their health's sake. If the ship did visit now and

again some island where the natives cultivated and prospered, as likely as not small-pox would be found raging, and the whaler, still short of drinking water, would be compelled to proceed elsewhere. On this occasion the more daring seamen would remain till a native canoe came out trading alongside, then wait for the great opportunity, get out through the open porthole, hide at the bottom of the boat and so be ferried ashore. But those less lucky than himself might have to serve three monotonous years, and even then end the voyage with little reward.

The discipline of a merchant ship and that of a whaler in the eighteen-forties were two quite different things. In the former it was strict: in the latter it was slack. But on getting clear of the port, watches and boats' crews were chosen for the voyage until the new hands arrived at some Pacific harbour to replace those who had run. In the boats the water breakers were always kept filled, and there were biscuits. Every day whilst cruising the whaler's boats were examined to see that everything was ready—harpoons and lances as sharp as razors, the lines in the tubs free from kinks and as supple as silk. The look-out man would be aloft at the royal masthead. "There she blows!" would be answered by the captain below bellowing, "Where away?" "Two points on the lee bow, sir," would answer the man. Up into the rigging armed with his spy-glass would spring the skipper. "Keep her off a couple of points," he would order as every man began to forget the weeks of monotony in that sudden excitement. Presently officers and their boats' crews would be away as soon as the ship got up to the school of sperm whales that were swimming unsuspiciously along. The main topsail would have been backed just before lowering the boats, and in order not to

scare the whales away, everything was done as quietly as possible.

But, just before getting up to the school, the steersmen would find the cachalots had sounded, so there was nothing for it but to wait twenty minutes till the mammals breached again: but then away went the boats whilst the pursued, with a "Choo'o, choo'o, choo'o," went spouting from their blow-holes close ahead, and the harpooner was just about to do his work. It was a tense moment, but when pulling towards a whale no oarsman was allowed to look round. Eyes in the boat! Otherwise he was given a tap on the head from the officer in charge that made the oarsman see a whole constellation of stars. When the boat had got so near to the whale that it was touching, the expression used was that it was "wood and black skin." And if the harpooner should fail to avail himself of the opportunity he would be "broken" as soon as he got back to the ship; for sometimes men, like whales, became gallied either from nervousness or excitement. Moreover there was a difference in technique, which had to be appreciated. The harpooner might have only recently joined the ship, although anything but a novice in his art. Perhaps he had been accustomed only to hunting the right whale and not the sperm. In the former case a long dart was used, and the manner of approach was towards the fore shoulder: then, after fastening the harpoon into the whale, the boat was quickly backed out of the way of the beast's flukes or there was speedy disaster.

The harpooner's attack on a right whale was made from a distance of from a couple to ten yards. But the sperm whale would be "fastened" by running the boat to the corner of the flukes alongside, and then attacking at from four to six yards. It was always a remarkable fact that as soon as one whale

had been struck all the rest of the school were aware of it, and then the surrounding water became as if an earthquake had disturbed it, and the whole gallied school were rushing off to windward. Frantic with anger was the boat's officer as he exhorted, threatened, encouraged the crew to row after the whale that had been missed by the unskilful harpooner. Perhaps for an hour that boat would be pulled to windward till human strength could toil no more, and then it would be turned round to go down wind towards the hove-to ship, now almost hull down.

On one occasion a cachalot had as many as seven English harpoons in him and attached three entire boats' lines, or about three-quarters of a mile of cordage, together with one line-tub and numerous drogues. But in spite of all this dragging him back, the whale succeeded in getting right away solely by superior speed. Two days intervened, and then this same whale was sighted again by a totally different whaler, who managed to kill him. Later on, those two ships met in port, and the victor returned to the original attacker those seven harpoons and lines left in the whale. Usually if the harpooner were able to fasten solid into one whale all the other boats would be able to fasten each on to another whale: for it was an observed fact that when one whale had been made fast, the school would remain and give the other craft also a chance. Blackfish were especially lively creatures and wont to breach out of the water right over a boat, but if no whales were about these were captured, as they yielded several barrels of oil which fetched a good price.

Three years was by no means an excessive time for a whaler to be away from her home port, and Captain J. D. Whidden mentions in his *Old Sailing-Ship Days* that during the year 1848 he signed on

at Tahiti aboard the whaling ship *George*, which had already been out forty-seven months, and had encountered such ill-luck that she had taken only about 1,200 barrels of oil. It is hardly surprising that during such a lengthy period most of her crew had at various times deserted, so that only four of her original ship's company now remained in her. She took only one more whale, became so short of provisions that she had to speak another whaler after rounding the Horn, and beg a few stores, and there was not a bit of tobacco in the *George* for over a month. One such voyage as this usually cured a man of further desire to go whaling.

After the cachalot was dead it usually floated, but sometimes it could be kept from sinking only with great difficulty. On certain occasions, also, after the carcase had been secured to the ship's side, it became necessary to chop away the iron chain supporting the body: for in the case of a big whale which suddenly began to sink, this was the only way to prevent serious damage to the vessel. But normally, after the boats had got the cachalot alongside and secured parallel to the ship, the work commenced of removing the blubber and other valuable parts. A staging was erected over the vessel's side where the officers operated after the bulwarks had been removed. The rest of the crew, having overhauled the cutting-falls attached to the masthead, proceeded to man the windlass.

The ship was now hove-to, and presently the sea would become red with blood, and a school of sharks for the next few hours would voraciously devour the pieces of fat which got adrift, but never touching the flesh of the whale itself. The work of removing the blubber was called "cutting in," and the first operation was to use the spade on the lard between the eye and the pectoral fin. A large hook was then

passed through and connected to the tackles, one hand lowering himself down for the purpose on to the dead whale, being careful not to let the sharks get a chance at him. The windlass then began to revolve, and assisted by spades, the blubber was separated from the carcase, and then stowed in the ship's hold. The blubber after being cut into slips was then placed in the boilers in order to extract the spermaceti and the sperm-oil, the refuse being utilized as the fuel for the furnace in boiling, giving a clear, fierce flame. This boiling process was technically known among whaling men as "trying out," and on a dark night following the day's hunting, the sea would witness the strange sight of a vessel exuding clouds of smoke, and flames bursting out illuminating ship and rigging, whilst the vessel still went sailing along and weird, stained figures with strange implements worked away near the fires. At a date long before ever a steamer's funnel was seen on the southern ocean, a British man-of-war once came across a British whaling ship thus engaged, and became alarmed at this flaming picture. Coming up so as to speak the whaler, the naval vessel hailed and inquired what the crew were doing. The latter's master replied laconically, "Trying." "Trying?" repeated the man-of-war's captain. "Trying? Trying what? To set your ship on fire?"

All the same there was danger during this boiling if a sea or shower of rain caused the oil, already highly heated, to reach the fires below. But if all went well, the oil was eventually placed in the cooler adjoining the try-works, transferred to casks and stowed in the hold. Three days was the average time for "cutting in," "trying out" and getting into casks the clear oil of the biggest species of whale.

Every service has its own particular adherents and experts, but there was a divided opinion amongst

sailormen concerning these ships. The clipper seaman was accustomed to the steady routine of a well-run vessel; and unless he were a deserter, or for some reason was without a ship, he was not attracted by the whaler with its long spells of comparative idleness, its strenuous spells of disagreeable work, and its long voyages of several years. On the other hand, the master of the whaling ship was not anxious to take the clipper sailor. Provided the whaler had its experienced mates, its skilled harpooners too, it was preferable to train a raw crew than sign on a lot of disgruntled hard-case fellows who would cause trouble during those long, monotonous days away from land.

But the sea always has called men to leave the land, and to some there was an especial appeal to adventure which only a voyage in these whalers held out: for it combined the love of fighting with travel right round the world long before steam navigation came into the sphere of possibility. There were two well-known mottoes which the inexperienced soon learnt to know. "A dead whale or a stove boat" warned him that though the whale was an ugly, clumsy, stupid brute of some seventy tons displacement, yet he was sometimes nearly four times longer than the length of the whaling boat; so that the vicious fifteen-foot-wide cachalot's tail and the twenty-foot jaw of the right whale were remembered in the advice, "Beware of a sperm's jaw and a right whale's flukes."

There is on record the incident of three boats having been destroyed by one blow of the whale's tail. But a sperm's great lower jaw with its twin rows of glistening teeth has snapped off the forward end of a boat with two of its men with terrifying suddenness. In the year 1819 the American whaling ship *Essex* of Nantucket had an experience such as shows

the sperm's strength in an amazing manner. Owen Chase was the name of the *Essex's* mate and he had been left on board in charge of the ship whilst the master and second mate were out after a whale. Chase was heading the *Essex* down towards them when he saw the sperm lying on the surface and apparently considering the ship. It then settled just below the surface, as whales do when making an attack. The cachalot now headed for the *Essex*, so Chase ordered the helm up to avoid the brute. Unfortunately the ship had too little way on just then to get out of the attack that was coming; for the sperm struck the ship on the bow with such a collision as nearly threw all hands on their faces, the impact being like the striking of the hull against a rock.

This animal had now become the attacker instead of the intended victim, and after passing right below the ship's hull, scraping the keel, came to the surface and exhibited his anger by thrashing the water with his tail and snapping his jaws. But he had done the necessary damage, and now the *Essex* began to sink. Chase started the pump, signalled the boats to return, and even as he was getting provisions ready for the boats, along came the whale again at about six knots, flinging the surf in all directions, thrashing about with his terrible tail, and again struck the ship on the windward side just below the cathead, so leaving the bows completely stove in. Thus avenged of man's insults, the whale made off to leeward, and was never seen again. But the unfortunate *Essex* was utterly done for and soon foundered. The crew then underwent an appalling experience for ninety days in the boats, so that some of them died by starvation and the rest kept themselves alive only by eating their flesh and the flesh of one other who died after the casting of lots: a dreadful situation that none the less

has occurred more than once in the days of the sailing ship. The mate's boat was subsequently picked up by the British brig *India* of London; and the captain's boat a few days later by another whaler named the *Dauphin*.

CHAPTER VIII

WHALERS AND SEALERS

RIGHT away south of the line which joins Fremantle and the Cape of Good Hope, in fact, so near to the Antarctic continent as to be in latitude 50° S., there lies one of the most lonely and desolate islands in the world, mountainous, glaciated, wind-swept. Totally uninhabited, it possesses any number of deeply indented bays and coves, and it is one of those few spots on the map where depots have been placed in case some shipwrecked mariners should have the misfortune to find themselves cast away here.

Its name is Kerguelen or Desolation Island—whichever you like to call it. The former reminds one of its French discoverer, Kerguelen Trémarec, who found it in 1772: but the other name is more suggestive of the place's true character. During the years that followed it was visited by whalers and sealers, but otherwise no ship had any attraction to call there. Still, in 1893 the French Government established an unwatched depot at Hillsborough Bay in a cave at the foot of a cliff, a black cairn against some grey rocks having been erected to indicate the position. The entrance to the cave has been closed by stones, and above it is the inscription: "Vivres et Vêtements." Thus the modern adventurer would be able there to find boxes of preserved beef, barrels containing clothes and blankets, biscuits, and boxes of matches. But now that the days of the sailing ships are past, and steamships are able to keep to

the trade routes, it is very unlikely that this distress depot will be required.

But this story begins just a hundred years ago and we shall see it through the eyes of John Nunn, an Ipswich seaman who was born in 1803. Nunn was a typical British sailor of the early nineteenth century, brought up to the sea, longing to know something of the world beyond the limits of the British Isles, and destined to have a whole chapter of adventures before he should die. His father was an east-coast smack-owner, but after helping him for a time, John served for a while aboard one of those Revenue cutters which were employed on the look-out for smugglers. Sometimes there were quite exciting chases, and even an exchange of shots: but before long John found this semi-naval service too restricted for his liking and wanted to go foreign.

So it happened that he signed on aboard the 400-ton sailing ship *Royal Sovereign* in the year 1825. This vessel was about to leave the Thames to look for seals on Kerguelen Island, but ever since Captain R. Rhodes of the whaler *Hillsborough* had visited the place in 1799 there had been vessels going out there, after the whales and seals. Rhodes had busied himself surveying many of the harbours on the lee (or east) side whilst his crew were away sealing and whaling; for the right whale used to frequent these bays and fjords in large numbers. One has to remember all these many inlets in order to appreciate the somewhat unusual method adopted by the early nineteenth-century pioneers who came here. The nature of the coast made it too risky a business for these unwieldy, unhandy ships to go smelling close to the land, so they used to take out from England half a dozen of the usual whaling boats, but also they carried in frame a 40-ton cutter. Having arrived at Kerguelen the big ship would moor herself in

some safe and sheltered bay, the frames of the 40-tonner would be taken ashore, the pieces reassembled, the craft rigged like a contemporary cutter yacht, and then the crew would go cruising right round the island, in and out of the bays, skirting the pinnacles, landing, capturing and flensing the seals, and then boiling down the blubber. The whaleboats would also be employed hunting the whales quite close in.

Thus each of these voyages to Kerguelen was in the nature of an expedition, since the ship would settle herself in her bay for two or three years and be partly unrigged whilst the small craft went about their business. And when the time came that the vessel had all the oil on board, the 40-tonner would be hauled well above high water, entrenched in a roughly made dry dock, and there she would remain until the expedition returned for another spell. In this way, of course, there were several of these deserted cutters left on the island at various dates. They were not called cutters but "shallops," that old word which had come into seamen's vocabulary from the Dutch and was often used to indicate smaller fore-and-aft-rigged vessels.

Now several years before the *Royal Sovereign* set forth there had reached Kerguelen a ship called the *Frances* from London, and she had taken with her in frame her shallop; and there was another vessel named the *Favourite* which arrived with her shallop about the same time as the *Royal Sovereign*. After the departure of these two ships, the shallops had both been hauled up the beach in a bight at the south side named Greenland Bay—name enough to suggest that a British whaling vessel had once been here.

In August 1825 the *Royal Sovereign* anchored herself in Greenland Bay, and then proceeded to fit out these two shallops, which for convenience we shall

speak of by the name of their mother ships. In nine days both the *Frances* and the *Favourite* were caulked and paid ready for sea, each being launched by digging them out of their dry dock, and then by bousing them down and hauling them along the beach they reached the water. They were then towed alongside the *Royal Sovereign*, where the masts were stepped and the little craft rigged. After the sails had been bent, some of the *Royal Sovereign's* crew transferred to them, and next morning, towing the whaleboats astern, they started off for Royal Sound to the N.N.E., and the latter went ashore to slaughter the seals and sea-elephants.

Here the opportunity was taken of bringing off from the beach great stones as ballast, the seal blubber being brought off also in rafts, but each shallop had also a dinghy. Finally, when the seals in this neighbourhood had been killed, the *Frances* sailed back to put the produce aboard the *Royal Sovereign*. The *Frances* next proceeded along the windward or western shore of Kerguelen, the crew consisting of James Lawrence of Rotherhithe (one of the *Royal Sovereign's* mates); John Nunn, and John Richardson and James Stilliman, both of Burnham, Essex. There were plenty of suitable small harbours on that west coast where the *Frances* could anchor for the dark hours, and one night whilst in Young William Harbour, when it was so still that there was not so much as a ripple on the water, the crew were suddenly alarmed by a fin-whale which rose alongside the shallop. His tail came in contact with the *Frances's* hull, shook her violently, and then disappeared. Perhaps there never were any people in the world so superstitious as the old-fashioned seamen until the introduction of steam navigation knocked many of these primitive ideas to bits. But, any way, the shallop's crew thought this whale

incident was most ominous, and later on Nunn dreamed that the shallop was wrecked. Gloomy people? Well, no doubt the desolation of the island had got on their nerves.

It was at the beginning of November this year that the *Frances*, after visiting the northern end of the island, got caught in a heavy snowstorm and fog. And then, whilst trying to beat out of a bay of Saddle Island, which is separated by a narrow strait from the main island at the north-west corner, the *Frances* missed stays: for these old-fashioned cutters with their indifferent sail plan and baggy canvas and bluff hulls were anything but handy, and before the shallop could be persuaded to come round she was hard on the rocks of this ironbound coast. She quickly started leaking, but the crew managed to get ashore with a few things, and then she sank in seven fathoms. The position was not a cheerful one, for as they looked up at the rugged, precipitous scenery there was nothing to suggest the least comfort in that bitter climate. However, they wandered about and presently discovered a cave, which they entered with their scant provisions and secured the entrance against the cold blasts by means of the *Frances's* jib. Here they settled down as best they could, but walking further along they came to a bay where there was another shallop named the *Loon* which had been previously left by a whaler or sealer.

This roused hopes, and it was just possible that the *Favourite* and her whaleboats might one day come along here in the course of their duties. They could hardly dare to hope that this might be the case, but everything possible should be done. They accordingly chalked a sentence on the bows of the *Loon* in case anyone should come along. "Look in the cabin," were the warning words, and then inside the shallop were left a description and the direction

of the cave. In the meantime a good look-out was being kept for the shallop to come along, but the weather was bad and often thick. Day after day sped by, until a whole fortnight had elapsed, and the provisions were running desperately short; when one day these men heard voices on the beach, and next there came running along some of their old messmates. For the crew of the *Favourite*, commanded by the *Royal Sovereign's* third mate, had landed in the bight at the strait, seen the chalked notice, and then begun to search for the cave. It was sheer good luck, for the *Favourite* had not intended calling in there: but she had been caught in a squall by Saddle Island and lost her main boom. She therefore had run into the strait to take the *Loon's* mast for the purpose, the crew had then seen the chalked marks, and so the others were found.

After the new boom had been finished, the *Favourite* with the survivors on board proceeded south to Greenland Bay, where they came alongside the *Royal Sovereign*. Now in the careers of most men this wreck and those hardships which followed would remain the outstanding experience of a lifetime. But there are some people who seem born for adventure and cannot avoid exciting events. The *Favourite* was now sent on another cruise, and the old shipwrecked crew of the *Frances* went in her, except for Richardson. Sailing off again to the north-west, they continued their work and went still further round the island to the north-east corner, where they were compelled to lie weather-bound in a bay called Christmas Harbour for eleven days. They put to sea, but had to run back. Again they started, but had to shelter in Africa Bay. They were without a dinghy, and it was always a difficulty to get the craft hauled near enough to the shore for fetching fresh water. But at last they sailed round

the north-west corner once more and found themselves anchored by Saddle Island, which had been so unlucky for them in the past.

And now an extraordinary thing happened. It was the day after Christmas, the *Favourite* was still at anchor, but she suddenly sprang a leak. Possibly the cause was that she had been so badly knocked about by the seas, and originally so hurriedly put together, that she was in no sense of the word staunch. But any way she went down and left these men for the second time in that neighbourhood without a home. They hung on for a time, and since there was no dinghy they unshipped the boom, the cabin steps, the main and fore hatches; and with these they made a raft and reached the beach. Everything on the island was now as miserable-looking as it could be. The sea was bitterly cold, and the land was covered with snow: they therefore took up their abode in the *Loon*, which was still there. The food ran out at once, but they lived on the seals which they killed.

The outlook, however, was not a pleasant thought. Seeing that both shallops from Greenland Bay had now been lost, it was extremely unlikely that the *Royal Sovereign's* captain would be able to send anyone to find them. Moreover the surf was so bad in the neighbourhood of Saddle Island that the boats would not be able to land. To this dismal consideration had to be added the stern fact that there was now nothing to eat: for after eight days not even a penguin was obtainable. They managed, however, to find the 12-foot dinghy which the *Favourite* had on a previous occasion left at the island, and in her the men now transferred themselves to the main island. Here there awaited them a severe tussle. Weak through lack of food, they set out to look for seals which they could kill with their clubs; and having with the utmost difficulty crossed a high

ridge or mountain they were just able to descend to a beach where they found and killed sea-elephants. These animals would afford both food and blubber for fuel: but the weather was so bitterly cold that the men's hands were benumbed from the animals' blood freezing over them a complete covering of ice.

With great toil these weary, hungry men hauled themselves over that mountain and got back to the *Loon* with their food, but were too weary that day to cook it, so they fell asleep till morning. Six more weeks passed and they considered themselves lucky to have the shelter of this shallop, but they could not think of remaining here for ever, so they decided to try raising the *Favourite*, and thoughts of making for the Cape of Good Hope in her even crossed their minds. Seamen are always more or less versatile, but in those days, when their heads were not crammed with mechanical knowledge and their brains were slow to reason but their courage had not been affected by faring in ships of mammoth tonnage, such sailors were accustomed to voyaging in quite small craft, and thought little of it, as we shall see before the end of the chapter. It is since the days of steam that we have got into our heads the erroneous idea that the ocean is suitable only for big ships: but the recent voyages of quite small fore-and-afters are bringing us back to a right knowledge and correct judgment.

So these men set to work on the *Favourite* which had treated them so badly. They began by removing the ballast at low tide, and then they secured four casks to her, some pieces of timber, and the 12-ft. dinghy with the idea of floating her off as the tide rose. But unfortunately the *Favourite* had sunk too deeply in the sand and there was not a sufficient rise of tide, and it was soon evident that the task

was hopeless. They therefore contented themselves with turning a whale-lance which they possessed into a saw, and thus managed to cut away the mast close to the deck. Then, having unrigged her, they towed all the gear and spars to the shore.

And since the *Favourite* was impracticable, they determined to start away in the *Loon*. This was a long job; she needed repairing and caulking and her seams had to be stopped. But the crew set to work with a will, some oakum for caulking was made out of the shallop's hempen cable, pitch was obtained close to a volcanic burning mountain, the mast was stepped by using the bowsprit as improvised sheers, the rigging was set up, and at last with great difficulty she was floated off, to their unmitigated joy. Aboard her were those much-prized tools, lances, seal clubs (rather like a policeman's baton), knives, spears. The dinghy was secured astern, and at last with a northerly wind blowing the *Loon* sailed away to the southward past that burning mountain and its hot springs, past the ice-covered scenery, anchoring at night in different bays. And all this time they wondered and thought about the *Royal Sovereign*. Would she still be waiting for them in Greenland Bay? Would it still be possible to reach her before she started back for England? The thought seemed too wonderful to realize, and so the little *Loon* continued on her way to the southern end of the island.

At last the shallop rounded the promontory and entered Greenland Bay. Gone! The bight was empty: there was not a sign of the *Royal Sovereign*. It was a grievous disappointment, yet it was really inevitable. The next thing now was to settle on a site and make themselves as comfortable as the circumstances allowed. For if they were destined to live on Desolation Island they would still need shelter

and food. It was therefore resolved to build a hut near Shoalwater Bay at the south-east corner of the island. Thither they sailed in the shallop with their goods, such as they possessed, and what they could find on the beach of Greenland Bay. That done, they took the *Loon* back to Greenland Bay, unrigged her and hauled her well up the beach.

A minor expedition now began, partly by land and partly by sea. For the dinghy was hauled over a neck of land into the Royal Sound and then launched again: the intention being by this amphibious journey to avoid the open water outside. It was whilst this boat was crossing the sound that a school of whales came in, giving the men a rare fright. One whale passed right under the boat, lifted her out on his back and then allowed her once more to float. Adventure after adventure! These men had never been fated for a humdrum life in England! And now they rowed as fast as they could, but the whale chased after them, and dived below the boat as before. Nunn believed that the reason was found in the white under-water of the boat's hull, which resembled the underneath part of a whale.

After these excitements the boat reached the opposite shore in safety. Here they landed, turned the boat up with its keel to windward, used her as a temporary hut and slept. It was hard going after that, and the distance was long: but at last they got the boat and themselves to Long Point at the south-east corner of Kerguelen, where they set to work and made a proper hut out of turf blocks. On the whole, considering what they had come through, this habitation was not so bad, and the blubber lamp burned inside cheerfully. There were any number of the black-fish whales in the neighbourhood, and the little community might have been worse off. But always at the back of their minds was the possibility

—even the hope—that before long some ship for whales or seals would come to Desolation Island. They were keeping always a good look-out where the hut was erected, but it was some distance round the corner, in a bay called Shallop Harbour, that a vessel approaching from the north-east was likely first to call.

It would be a terrible tragedy if she were to visit Kerguelen without the men knowing. And so this possibility was avoided by the following precaution. It was now August 1827, and two long years had passed since the *Royal Sovereign* had arrived there. Surely a vessel might come any time now: so they made a board, took it overland to Shallop Harbour and stuck it up in such a manner that no ship entering there could fail to notice and read the inscription which was cut out. That latter directed the observer to "Hope Cottage," as they had named their turf hut by Long Point. It was forty-eight miles over rough ground and snow, but after four days and nights on the journey the men got to Shallop Harbour, erected the sign and came back to the hut.

And so at last there came a dramatic incident, for one day an object was observed seaward. "Look!" cried one of the survivors from the hut. "Did you see that great albatross? Over that rock there!" The other man looked. "Why, bless me," he answered. "That's no albatross: it's the peak of a cutter's sail." Thereupon with keen enthusiasm they ran down to the beach and signalled in case they had not been seen: but the cutter hoisted her Union Jack to show they had been observed, hove-to and sent her boat ashore. The meeting need only be imagined, but there was no time to waste as there was a nasty surf and the cutter was anxious to get under way at once. The lonely men were not long in going

aboard, and as the cutter proceeded round the east side of the island there was an exchange of yarns.

To begin with, she was found to be the *Lively*, belonging to one of Messrs. Enderby's whaling ships named the *Sprightly*, a schooner-rigged vessel which had recently arrived out from England and was now lying at Howe Foreland. Her shallop *Lively* on entering Shallop Harbour had noticed that board with its message, and then, after returning to the *Sprightly*, the captain had given them permission to search the coastline with telescopes and find the missing men. And as the *Lively* came round the corner, every glass was scanning the beach until these living objects were seen signalling and answered by the Jack. It was thus that after two and a quarter years the *Royal Sovereign's* men got back to better food and better accommodation. But it was to be no picnic for them even now. Having been taken into the *Sprightly*, the latter's captain now split up his men into two parties, so that in each division there should be available the help and knowledge of the *Favourite's* late crew. The *Sprightly* had three five- or six-oared whaleboats, and these were sent to various bays to bring back seals and sea-elephants.

Now the right whales were wont also to visit Kerguelen's bays and natural harbours. And it happened that one day whilst in Whale Bay, on the east side, a man aboard the *Lively* suddenly cried out: "There she spouts!" and pointed seaward. Every man on deck saw it at once—a fine 90-barrel whale. Instantly all was excitement, as the men thought of the fine addition the animal would make to their wages. A boat was immediately lowered and gave chase with a fine enthusiasm. Frantically the men pulled at their oars, and soon the boat was up to the whale. The harpooner was unfortunately somewhat inexperienced, and though he hurled the

harpoon and struck the cetacean, it made fast in the shoulder, which was too far for'ard. The correct technique was to approach the whale by its tail and come along the animal's starboard side. Then as the boat got quite close, the harpooner, his legs against the thigh-boards in those two semicircular openings of the bows, would warn the boat's crew to be ready. Immediately after he would endeavour to strike the whale "between wind and water" just abaft his fore fin. "Give way, lads," would come the exhortation, and then the order "Shear off," at the very moment when he cast the harpoon. "'Stern—*hard*!" would be the final instruction, and the men would start with their oars backing the boat for all they were worth, just as the whale began smacking things about with his tail.

In the present instance the whale speeded up like the wind itself, the line fairly leapt out of the oval tub between the after thwart and the one just ahead. Through those chocks at the bows—iron-made to prevent fire arising through friction—the line ran racing out from its neat coils, the "line manager" (as he was called) supervising it at the tubs, and all ready in the boat was the mop with a bucket to keep wetting the line and prevent it catching on fire. Somewhere handy were the blue lights ready in case night overcame the boat and she wished to signal to the *Lively*. The pace was thrilling and the incident had happened so suddenly. Jumping, banging, smashing against the waves, cleaving the water with her fine bows and casting the spray on either side, the boat went madly on as the 10-knot whale in its progress spooned up a mass of sea foam which came roaring, swishing, curling, hissing over his nose and sped by the boat's gunwales all snow-white and bubbly.

But now the whale was like a wild horse with the

bit between its teeth, and mischief guided him to head straight for some rocks and a cluster of barely covered pinnacles, which seemed certain to puncture the boat, until at the last moment he altered course and made a tack right out to sea. Speed? The animal never slowed up an instant, minutes flew past, the miles added up and the whaler men began to get a little anxious. How long could this be continued? How long could the whale keep this effort going? Would they ever see the *Lively* again? For she had long since vanished out of sight. So they all got their weight on to the line and endeavoured with their full strength to haul the boat up to the whale that they might get the lances into the brute. But it was an utterly futile effort at that pace. If you have ever tried from a motor-boat to haul in the dinghy whilst travellling quickly, you will know how impossible was their task.

But now the crisis had been reached, three hours had passed, they had travelled at least thirty miles from the land and night had come on. It was dreadfully disappointing, but prudence insisted that they had gone far enough in that lonely ocean and they might never get back to windward. If a gale sprang up they would have a very small chance, and some of them in the boat had experienced their full share of exciting adventures. Thus, with deep reluctance they had to cut the line, the boat gradually lost its way, but the whale with the harpoon still in his shoulder went tearing off, raising a mountain of foam at his "bows" just as before.

Three hours of glorious life! There was nothing now remaining but to pull back towards the shore, and it was as likely as not that the *Lively* would be missed. But finally they burned a blue light, and to their great relief they were answered by the shallop, which came running down the moonlight and picked

them up after as fine a bit of hunting as could ever be wished. For some months longer the *Sprightly* and *Lively* continued to work around Kerguelen, and then the former's captain decided to visit the Crozet Islands—not in the schooner, but in the shallop. This uninhabited group had been discovered only fifty-six years previously, and the skipper was anxious to get any seals that might be there. It was quite an undertaking to let that shallop make such an ocean voyage, but leaving most of his men behind, he set off in the *Lively* to the north-west.

This group is another of those lonely localities where there are now provision depots in case a vessel gets wrecked. Actually in December 1906 the Norwegian whaling ship *Catherine* was wrecked on these very islands; yet the crew managed to find the depot, but it had been almost demolished by the gales, and the food was practically unfit for consumption; however, they managed to find plenty of seals and penguins.

The *Lively* returned safely to Kerguelen, and then at last both she and the schooner *Sprightly*, having concluded their work, weighed anchor and both of them sailed away across the South Indian Ocean to Table Bay, a distance of 2,095 miles. There they remained only four days, but Nunn and his fellow-adventurers, late of the *Favourite*, were treated with some distinction. And then, passing up the West African coast, they at length came out of the Atlantic into the English Channel. Both ships reached the Downs safely, but after this long voyage the little *Lively* almost at the very end of her journey from the other side of the globe got caught in bad weather. She had rounded to and was close-reefing her mainsail when along came a heavy sea which washed a couple of men over the side, drowning one, but the other was saved. After this distressing incident as

a finale, the two craft came up the Thames and the expedition ended.

That island, which was the scene of so many adventures, had been discovered, as we have mentioned, by de Kerguelen Trémarec. This Breton noble had sailed from Lorient in 1771, and then, passing by way of Mauritius, reached his destination in the following February, yet the vile weather and the perpetual fogs made his sojourn off the lonely island quite short, and he returned home. But in the spring of 1773 he started off again and landed at what he had named "South France" in December of the same year. Although this was the local midsummer he found the weather so bitter with gales and fogs, and the island so desolate and barren, that he changed the name now to the "Land of Desolation," declaring that he would rather live in Iceland than down there, and came home. However, posterity has shown its sympathy with this disappointed explorer by calling it Kerguelen Island. He was not the last Frenchman to visit there, for some of his own countrymen in our own time sailed out there in a ketch, after calling at Brixham, with the idea of engaging in whaling: but the expedition was destined to end disastrously.

CHAPTER IX

ABOARD AN AMERICAN WHALER

AMONG the most important harbours in America from which the whalers of the nineteenth century used to set forth must be mentioned New Bedford, Nantucket, Fairhaven, Newport, especially. These names have become so welded to whaling history that it is difficult to think of these ports without conjuring up a mental vision of an old-fashioned ship with her white-painted ribbon on a black hull cruising along the lonely ocean under short sail ready to launch one of those conspicuous boats as soon as the eager scanning look-out hailed the deck.

At these places there grew up whole families of whaling people whose life interest was wrapped up in this subject, who married and intermarried those who built or sailed or part-owned the ships. At the beginning of the nineteenth century there were eight or nine thousand people living at Nantucket all practically dependent on the whaling industry. Herman Melville wrote of Nantucket as "more lonely than the Eddystone Lighthouse," and amusingly suggested that the people here "are so shut up, belted about, every way enclosed, surrounded, and made an utter island of by the ocean, that to their very chairs and tables small clams will sometimes be found adhering, as to the backs of turtles." "What wonder, then, that these Nantucketers, born on a beach, should take to the sea for a livelihood!"

And it is Melville who has enabled us to recon-

struct for ourselves those little mosaics, which, pieced together in their right places, give us a true picture of what a Nantucket whaler looked like! "She was a ship of the old school," he says, "rather small if anything, with an old-fashioned claw-footed look about her. Long seasoned and weather-stained in the typhoons and calms of all four oceans, her old hull's complexion was darkened. . . . Her venerable bows looked bearded. Her masts—cut somewhere on the coast of Japan, where her original ones were lost overboard in a gale—her masts stood stiffly up like the spines of the three old kings of Cologne. Her ancient decks were worn and wrinkled. . . . She was a thing of trophies. . . . All round, her unpanelled, open bulwarks were garnished like one continuous jaw, with the long, sharp teeth of the sperm whale, inserted there for pins, to fasten her old hempen thews and tendons to."

And the pride of service was never more eloquently expressed than in Captain Peleg's remark in connection with the merchant service as opposed to his own. "Marchant service be damned. Talk not that lingo to me. Dost see that leg?—I'll take that leg away from thy stern, if ever thou talkest of the Marchant Service to me again. Marchant Service indeed! I suppose now ye feel considerable proud of having served in those marchant ships!" Could anything be more discriminating?

So we think of these veteran vessels as owned by well-to-do, retired Quaker skippers of the most strict narrow-mindedness, yet possessed of such a knowledge of ocean life as could hardly be surpassed by any other seafarers in the world. Those lengthy voyages and their Puritanical personality, and those long hours alone brooding and entering up their journals, created a special type of humanity—strong, independent, fanatically conservative, dominant, of

an enclosed kind of piety, yet most wonderfully wide-awake to the main chance of remunerative whaling and a hard business bargain. The life of such a part-owner could be divided into several well bulk-headed chapters, each ending up one separate section of a full career. Cabin boy, boatman, harpooner, mate, captain, ship-owner, sexagenarian, retirement, capitalist. These nine would make chapter headings for the biography of any of these whaler skippers. But right till the end they were the keenest superintendents and the sternest critics of ships and men. Taskmasters? Melville sums one of these old men up in a single sentence. "They told me in Nantucket, though it certainly seems a curious story, that when he sailed the old *Categut* whaleman, his crew upon arriving home were mostly all carried ashore to the hospital, sore exhausted and worn out. For a pious man, especially for a Quaker, he was certainly rather hard-hearted, to say the least. He never used to swear, though, at his men, they said; but somehow he got an inordinate quantity of cruel, unmitigated hard work out of them."

But if the largest owner of an American whaler were a retired skipper, the other shareholders would consist of widows, fatherless children and chancery wards, each owning "about the value of a timber head, or a foot of plank, or a nail or two in the ship. People in Nantucket invest their money in whaling vessels, the same way that you do yours in approved state stocks bringing in good interest."

Whilst lying in her home port the whaler used to have a kind of wigwam erected on deck abaft the mainmast, made of bone taken out of jaws of the right whale. This tent was the last thing to be stowed before heaving up the anchor; it was symbolical of the packing away of shore authority. But when the vessel was about to leave Nantucket for her three

or four years' voyage, and the last rigger had been sent ashore, she was hauled out from the wharf and the skipper would tell the chief mate to muster all the hands—"blast 'em"—whilst the pilot was busy taking the ship out, his position being forward. Some profane chantey would be presently heard reaching the shore as that mixed crew got active to their work of walking round the capstan. The old man aft would be stamping about in a rage, hating audibly with his Quaker "thous" and "thees," hurling at them insults and exerting his authority from the very first.

Then at last the pilot would drop over the side into his little sailing-boat, the last tie with the land would be separated and it would be a long time before any of the crew ever was allowed to use his legs on solid earth. We in these days of quick passages in steamships with wireless conversation going on all day and all night hardly realize the utter isolation of a four-year whaling voyage under a tyrannous martinet for skipper. If any man had the least feelings of sentiment, if the comfort of a home port and the heart-strings of affection meant anything at all to him, the beginning of these long trips was something unforgettable. We find this home-sickness, this desperate deep-burning loneliness coming out even in the skippers' journals, which would never be soiled by a glance from any of their crews: but it is there right enough. The womenfolk would be there on the wharf, tear-eyed, anxious, but hopeful that after a few years the ship would come back full of a fortune. At last a shout from a deep-throated retired captain, a warning to the harpooners not to "stave the boats needlessly . . . white cedar plank is raised full three per cent. within the year. Don't forget your prayers, either, Mr. Starbuck, mind that cooper don't waste the spare staves. Oh! the sail-

needles are in the green locker! Don't whale it too much a' Lord's Day, men; but don't miss a fair chance either, that's rejecting Heaven's good gifts." And with this last expression of his crowded, mingled thoughts, the principal proprietor would have watched his old ship gradually get smaller as she made her way to the open sea.

That night the long roll of the Atlantic would begin its game with the ship, the blocks would whine and creak, the rigging would take up its strains, the canvas would belly to the fresh breeze and the mast heads swing backwards and forwards across the sky of stars as the watch below was clewing up its harbour memories till they could be let loose again after many months. Strangers began to size each other up, enmities and friendships began to be formed: but both would be broken and reconstituted long before the first man had deserted at the first opportunity.

As a general rule you will always find that islanders take to the sea in some sort of way: for ships and seafaring can never be allowed out of their minds for long. It used to be the custom for British Greenland whalers on the outward voyage to call at the Shetlands and fill up with the rest of their crew, and on the return trip leave them where they found them. In the Nantucket whalers it was frequently the habit to call at the Azores, outward bound, and ship quite a few natives. American whale-ships had been calling there for years, so you would find in a Nantucket ship North Americans, Portuguese, coal-black niggers, Dutchmen, Frenchmen, Manxmen, Maltese, natives from the Pacific Islands, Spaniards, and Britons, too. The ship might be American but the crew were international—or without a nation. If half the failures in this world are caused by men not knowing what they want and not being able to

identify it when they see it, then you might say that the fo'c'sle of a whaler was full of failures. The ship attracted men from all parts of the world as sensitively as the magnet affects the compass needle. Some of these hands were just drifting about the globe without any aim other than to remain alive. A ship was synonymous with a home: a whaling voyage was a sort of guarantee that for three or four years any way there would be grub, somewhere to sleep, and possibly a tolerable amount of money to draw at the end.

Bullen's description of a New Bedford whaler bears out Melville and the rest. "Truculent-looking men accompanied us to our several boarding-houses, paid our debts for us, finally bringing us by boat to a ship lying out in the bay. As we passed under her stern, I read the name *Cachalot*, of New Bedford: but as soon as we ranged alongside, I realized that I was booked for the sailor's horror—a cruise in a whaler. Badly as I wanted to get to sea, I had not bargained for this, and would have run some risks to get ashore again; but they took no chances, so we were all soon aboard. . . . A more perfect contrast to the trim-built English clipper-ships that I had been accustomed to I could hardly imagine. She was one of a class characterized by sailors as built by the mile, and cut off in lengths as you want 'em, bow and stern almost alike, masts standing straight as broomsticks, and bowsprit soaring upwards at an angle of about forty-five degrees. She was old-fashioned in her rig as in her hull. . . . I was rudely roused from my meditations by the harsh voice of one of the officers, who shouted, 'Naow then, git below an' stow yer dunnage, 'n look lively up agin.' . . . Tumbling down the steep ladder, I entered the gloomy den which was to be for so long my home, finding it fairly packed with my shipmates.

A motley crowd they were. I had been used in English ships to considerable variety of nationality; but here were gathered, not only the representatives of five or six nations, but 'long-shoremen of all kinds, half of whom had hardly ever set eyes on a ship before! The whole space was undivided by partition, but I saw at once that black men and white had separated themselves, the blacks taking the port side and the whites the starboard."

You can imagine this motley crew on the first night out. The greenhorns, prostrate with seasickness, were wondering why they had been such fools as to come aboard for an adventure of this sort. The officers, often enough bullying and sometimes of Portuguese nationality, were trying to get the ship into full working order, yet half the crew were just waking up to the fact that this was no home after all. But after a few days Portuguese and nigger, American and Briton, would settle down to the life and to the salt junk, hard biscuit and hot drinks sweetened with molasses. Only one thing aboard the ship was really satisfying: and that was the long sleep after the trick at the helm. Steering? This was a strange mechanism in the old ships, for the wheel was fixed to the tiller and the whole affair was moved athwart the ship, so that it needed no ordinary sailorman to control her.

But if she was aged and her fo'c'sle was foul, yet on deck she was kept spotlessly clean. Flush-decked, she was of about 350 tons, with the try-works measuring about ten feet by eight erected in the waist. Right aft were the galley and skylight by the taffrail, the wooden cranes for the boats being of course along the bulwarks. These boats were each fitted with a centreboard, a mast and two spritsails in addition to the oars and other gear, so that by the time her men had launched and got into her she

was already well loaded. Having slipped across the Atlantic and reached the sperm grounds, there were plenty of eyes looking out so as to earn that bounty of extra 'baccy which went to the first man who should report a whale. Plenty of false alarms came from the greenhorns, and it was usually the veteran who won the prize. And then the comparative comfort of passage-making gave way to frantic energy—hunting the whale in the boats for hours, then towing him alongside, slinging him securely, flensing him, and keeping the try-works going all through the night, and finally cleaning ship once more.

Out of a crew of say thirty-seven, twenty-four would be ordinary seamen. Fresh water except for drinking was forbidden. After all what was the sea for besides floating ships? But it is hope and the expectation of the future which keep men going as it did in those ships. The shares of profits, or as these shares were known, "lays," had been reckoned in accordance with each man's duties and usefulness. One two-hundredth share of oil at 200 dollars a tun meant £4 a barrel, but a greenhorn might be allotted only one two-hundred-and-seventy-fifth share of the clear net profits. This was just better than nothing and referred to as "a long lay." But from that would have to be deducted the charge for that assortment of fairly good but high-priced clothes which the captain issued from the ship's slop chest; in addition to the tobacco, matches and soap, also bought from the ship at extortionate terms.

Thus the whaler's life was likely to appeal only to three classes of men: those who had been compelled to leave the land to avoid gaol or starvation, those who thought they were going to see the world and gain adventures, and those who were determined to work their way up till they owned a whaling ship of their own. It was only the latter who ever

stuck to the occupation for voyage after voyage. No one who sympathizes with humanity can wish that those conditions should ever return. Better education has raised the standard of living aboard all kinds of ships: the difference between then and now is really much more than merely half a century.

You remember Melville's account of how the Nantucket *Pequod* whaler met the British whaler *Samuel Enderby* at sea and hailed her with "Ship ahoy! Hast seen the White Whale?" and Ahab ordered his boat to be manned and lowered with him in it to the water, and rowed alongside the London vessel. Ahab had lost a leg, so how was he to clamber up the English ship's side? It was then that the English skipper took in the situation. "I see, I see!" he shouted. Then to his men, "'Vast heaving there! Jump, boys, and swing over the cutting-tackle." The *Samuel Enderby* had only recently been cutting up a whale and the great tackles were still aloft and the massive blubber-hook still attached to the end. So this hook was lowered to Ahab, who slid his solitary thigh into the curve and was swung on board and exchanged yarns with the London skipper.

Melville speaks enthusiastically about that name Enderby, which will be found mentioned in our present volume more than once. He speaks of this London ship as named "after the late Samuel Enderby, merchant of that city, the original of the famous whaling house of Enderby & Sons; a house which, in my poor whaleman's opinion, comes not far behind the united royal houses of the Tudors and Bourbons, in point of real historical interest." Ever since that memorable year 1775, when this firm fitted out the first English ships that ever went hunting the sperm whale regularly, it had sent ship after ship into southern waters; though ever since

1726 the Coffins and Maceys had been sending their whalers from North America into the Atlantic. When the Enderby ship *Amelia* rounded the Horn and was the first of all vessels ever to harpoon whales in the Pacific and came home with a full cargo, she was but setting the fashion which was soon to be followed by British and American whalers. It was this same pioneering firm, too, which in 1819 sent out that exploration ship, the *Syren*, and made known the Japanese whaling grounds. Her skipper, however, was Captain Coffin of Nantucket. Melville refers to the *Samuel Enderby* as a fast-sailing ship, an hospitable ship. "Fore and aft, I say, the *Samuel Enderby* was a jolly ship; of good fare and plenty; fine flip and strong; crack fellows all, and capital from boot heels to hat-band."

But the first American ship, says Mr. R. McNab in his interesting monograph on New Zealand whaling, to take up bay whaling in the South Island of New Zealand was the *Erie*, which sailed from Newport, Rhode Island, bound for the South Pacific in April 1832, and got back to Newport again in June 1835 with 200 barrels of sperm and 1,800 of black oil. During the next few years, American whalers continued to frequent these waters, and the trade became considerable, for the early American whalers brought home such favourable news of their success. By these ships letters from New England were taken to the South Atlantic and New Zealand. So by 1836 such whalers as the *Samuel Robertson*, *Favourite*, *Mary Mitchell*, *Jasper*, *Erie*, *Vermont* and others sailed across from New Bedford, Fairhaven, Nantucket, Ploughkeepsie and other ports.

In the *Mary Mitchell's* journal of 1836, still in possession of the Nantucket Historical Society, we are able to see into the mind of her skipper day by day. Can we not almost see for ourselves the character

of this Captain Samuel Joy as he entered up his book after reaching safely Cloudy Bay, on the north-east shoulder of South Island? The date is Friday, April 22nd, and the punctuation is typical of this sailor type:

"Heavy S.E. gale bad Sea steered down past Cape Campbell looking for the harbor. At 5 saw it bearing N.W. steered for it and at 6 happily came to an Anchor. thus after much toil fatigue and Labour we are happily Arrived at our port it now only remains for us to be thankful to God for his preservation and safe Guidance of us thro these dark times—I shall ever esteem it as a merciful interposition in my favor that thro divine Providence I have been enabled to conduct this ship thro this Passage on a Coast without any person on board acquainted with it any more than myself and to the Lord be the Praise Amen Latter strong S.E. wind. Employed Clearing Ship Ther 58 Bar. 30.30."

Two days later arrived the *Jasper* and *Erie*. The *Mary Mitchell* having been moored, yards and topmasts were sent down, and boats were sent out whaling. Lugsails were now made for the boats and the hands kept busy. But we can see that there are always two aspects to ship life: one is as it appears from the angle of the mates and men, the other is as viewed through the anxious captain's eyes. Everyone who has had command of a vessel knows this well enough: the others are apt to forget this fact. Thus under April 30th Captain Joy writes: "The Second mate is no officer the fourth Mate is worse I can express my opinion of the others hereafter." Then apparently there was some friction with some of the English whalers, for twenty boats had come into a bay. "Commences with fine weather," Joy writes under Saturday, May 7th, "at 4 boats returned at 6 heavy S.E. gale sent on shore 22 cedar boards

Latter went out myself with 4 boats saw nothing wind blew up from S E heavy came into the Neck landed about 20 boats there and the most Blackguard language used from 5 english boats there Sparing no person at all in Short I hope I shall ever keep clear of English Ships again as they have no Authority."

Joy was his name but sorrow was his experience, for these daily entries are full of woes and disappointments. Thus Friday, May 27th, was another disheartening day: "fore part fresh S E wind at 4 boats returned 1 calf got today Latter part much fine rain went out with 4 boats the 4 mate a lame hand one of our steersman stopped to Save his oar and did not strike the whale O dear." And even the next day when his boats captured a whale and a calf he could but exert himself to write: "We now have hope I live in hope Latter part fine weather went out with 4 boats—Sick."

However, Joy must have withdrawn his animosity towards the British whalers, for on June 2nd he was able to make a satisfactory bargain: "fine weather at 5 boats returned I got an anchor from an English ship for 40 lbs tobacco and a steering oar Latter fine weather went out with 4 boats and the Captain Got a large whale wafted and anchored him." Other ships arrived from New England, but apparently Joy was not anxious for the society of his fellow humans. Whales were again killed, and then comes this delightful little summary of what happened on June 20th: "fore part cloudy began to boil at 5 boats returned got a Whale anchored him outside at 7 broke the cook's head for getting rum from the Shore contrary to law Latter part strong N W wind went out with 4 boats the others boiling."

It is the simple unforced sincerity of this whaling

captain which makes his journal so readable in spite of his quaint confusion of thoughts and absence of stops or commas. Joy was not an exception but a product of his time and environment when these wooden whalers contained hard-case seamen and peppery skippers. To criticize the crews is not to free the captains from blame: but discipline had to be maintained, even after a fashion, in these as in any other ships. Joy went on quarrelling with other whaler-masters as we learn from the sentence, "this day I formally noted the different masters that I would not agree in case my boats were stove that I would give up my claim to any Whale obliged to cut from in consequence of being stove."

Anyone with a little imagination and the knowledge of the ways of men can see how the deadly monotony of the life in such a distant place with Maoris to consort with was bound to make the crews dismal, disgruntled, and disgusted with life generally. There is an expression unofficially used to-day in the Royal Navy which describes exactly the condition into which these whaler men had descended through sheer boredom and mental weariness. Some who read these pages will recognize the phrase "b——y minded." It is not pretty, but it is truthful. And the first thing that a man in that condition does is to break out of the ship, go ashore and get drunk as soon as opportunity presents itself. Joy's men were thus disposed whilst the ship lay in semi-commission and the boats hunted for the whales. "John Wood left ship without leave got drunk I floged him and put him in irons Latter raining let the prisoner out of irons on promise of amendment" runs the laconic statement. And a few days later: "I cannot well leave the Ship in charge of the 4th mate he can do nothing in the boat and

has been Sick and dozey ½ the time we have been here." But finally this mate who also had "a difference with some of the crew requested his discharge" and went off: "a good riddance," Joy wrote.

Boats went on being stove, arguments continued between captains, but in August Joy began to refit his ship, topmasts were sent up, and on September 1st he was so pleased with life that he could write: "I feel better to-day." Presently topsails were bent, the fine weather began to break up, wood and water were fetched from the shore and preparations made for putting to sea. Boats were painted, harpoon lines coiled, the anchors hove in and stowed, and on September 27th, in company with two other New England whalers, the *Mary Mitchell* got under way. The season there had ended.

Although British, French and American whaling ships were using these New Zealand waters at that time to the number of forty, one-half of these were American, the average size being of 333 tons, but New Bedford and Fairhaven were the principal ports sending ships. In the year 1832 whaler-ships of 350 tons from New Bedford, Nantucket and New London were working to the following "lay" or scale of remuneration: The captain received one-fifteenth, Chief Mate one-twenty-fifth, Second Mate one-forty-fifth, Third Mate one-fiftieth, boat-steerers one-hundredth each, ordinary seamen one-hundred-and-seventy-fifth each, in the South New Zealand whaling; additional help was also obtained from the shore, where a few men who had deserted from some previous whaler could usually get a temporary job and bring along a few Maoris with them.

In one entry Captain Joy wrote that "the Second Mate had his boat robbed in his absence of a bottle of rum, it being customary to carry it here so that

in case of a hard drag to give it to the boats crew but they will carry no more from this ship as I will turn it all into the sea first." The practice was to take a bottle in each boat and give each man a drink after a heavy whale had been brought in. But, unfortunately, there was a rum shop ashore whither the crews were enticed from their duty and came aboard their ship insolent and incapable, with the result that someone's head got smashed, but it was not always the captain who came off best in the mutual rupture. It was the old story. As Conrad wrote twenty years before he died, "ships and men both rot in ports."

By the year 1839 the number of American whalers on the New Zealand coast reached the unprecedented number of thirty-seven, whereas five years previously there had been but one. Nothing could be more eloquent of the migration of whales than the change of grounds which these ships from across the world had been compelled to make. Still, as the reader will find in the course of our inquiry, the fleets have been obliged in different generations to do this over and over again. But, as showing the intimate connection that has always existed between whaling and exploration, it may not be out of place to mention that all this American development of Southern Pacific whaling culminated in the natural desire to explore and survey the seas still further south.

And so it all culminated in an American naval officer, Charles Wilkes, taking out from Hampton Roads an expedition in 1838 consisting of six vessels which were reduced to four. The Antarctic continent was discovered, and Wilkes Land shown on the modern maps remains as a further reminder that this industry of hunting leviathans is capable not merely of bringing into existence large fleets and employing considerable numbers of men, but of sowing the

seeds for future international complications if ever those extreme southern areas, through the advent of aerial navigation or scientific discovery, become of first-rate importance in the development of the world and its commerce.

CHAPTER X

CREWS AND CAPTAINS

IN the last chapter we have been able to see from Captain Joy's journal something of the anxieties of an American whaler's skipper in the South Seas. There is an old American whaling chantey which contains the following among its verses, and hints at the way the crew considered their duties aboard these ships:

They send you to New Bedford, that famous whaling port,
And give you to some land-sharks to board and fit you out.

In the boarding house full of the usual thieves and liars the future whaling crews were to listen to all sorts of yarns concerning the famous ships of the day. Men were embroidering incidents, and interested parties were telling of the fortunes to be made whaling:

They tell you of the clipper-ships a-going in and out,
And say you'll take five hundred sperm before you're six months out.

It's now we're out to sea, my boys, the wind comes on to blow;
One half the watch is sick on deck, the other half below.

And then of course comes a reference to the captain as in so many chanteys:

The Skipper's on the quarter-deck a-squinting at the sails,
When up aloft the lookout sights a school of whales.

"Now clear away the boats, my boys, and after him we'll travel,
But if you get too near his fluke, he'll kick you to the devil."[1]

[1] Given in J. C. Colcord's *Roll and Go*.

There is no question that the whalers had their own chanteys, just like the other merchant sailormen. There were, for instance, "The Boston Come-All-Ye," "There She Blows," "Blow Ye Winds" (from which the above extracts are taken), "Coast of Peru," "Rolling Down to Old Maui" and "A Dead Whale Or A Stove Boat." As to the latter Melville, shows that in the eighteen-forties this was still the custom in the whaling service. Many readers will remember the following passage out of *Moby Dick*:

" 'What do ye when ye see a whale, men?'

" 'Sing out for him!' was the impulsive rejoinder from a score of clubbed voices.

" 'Good!' cried Ahab, with a wild approval in his tones; observing the hearty animation into which his unexpected question had so magnetically thrown them.

" 'And what do ye next, men?'

" 'Lower away, and after them.'

" 'And what tune is it ye pull to, men?'

" 'A dead whale or a stove boat.' "

But we are able to get a little knowledge of the life aboard a British South Sea whaler from no less an authority than the journal of Captain John Balleny in the season 1830–9, when he was working the New Zealand waters whilst commanding Messrs. Enderby's whaling and sealing schooner *Eliza Scott*. Unfortunately the records of British whaling are far less complete than in the case of the American ships. Therefore every scrap of information that can be found is of the utmost value to us. So let us see how matters appeared to this English skipper.

From the first we cannot but admire his sensible treatment of his crew. They needed shore leave and he granted it. "December 9th. This day is fine. Gave the men 4 muskets and let them go into the woods to shoot and stretch their legs. Having no means of

obtaing [*sic*] fresh provisions but by the hook and gun Capt Freeman [of the *Sabrina*] and myself have generally endeavoured to provide for part of the crew, and I think a run on shore will do the men good, in point of fact the whole crew seem so disappointed in not being able to run as they expected that they are in a state little short of downright mutiny. Therefore I have allowed them to go and ramble in the woods but have always refused the boats unless with an officer."

But none the less Captain Balleny was always anxious lest his men would desert at the first opportunity. "In the afternoon saw a whale boat sailing up the harbour for which I was extremely sorry as it will afford an opportunity for the men to run." And sure enough two days later, when Balleny awoke and went on deck he found that five of his men had stolen a boat and made off. "This is a serious loss but as the rest of the crew seem perfectly content and willing to try their luck I still do not despair, indeed the remaining crew seem glad these people have gone and they all say they will now be comfortable. Two of these men were certainly two of the greatest blackguards I ever had on board a ship and I had a great deal of trouble with them on the passage out; more mutinous rascals could not be, & they have, I think, seduced two of the others from their duty. As for the 3rd. he had been much in Sydney and perhaps was the ringleader of the whole. I deplore now more than ever my long passage out, as I might perchance have saved them altho' I am aware it was their intention to run when they shipped, but I could not carry sail on the schooner and on unstowing the vessel here I found a sufficient reason." For the lowest tier of casks ought to have been filled with water ballast, but were now found "perfectly empty and it becomes

no longer a matter of wonder the ship would not bear her canvass, but a matter of wonder she got here at all."

On Christmas Day Captain Balleny dined aboard another vessel, and the latter's mates were allowed to dine aboard the *Eliza Scott*. "I told Mr. Moore, my chief mate, that I laid no embargo on his grog drinking on this day only to remember and keep within bounds of moderation. At 10 I returned on board and the only one sober was my 2nd. mate Mr. McNab. About 2 o'clock it blew so hard that both vessels drove & had to let go the 2nd. anchor. The mate still that stupid that I could not get him out of his bed." And on Boxing Day the much-worried skipper writes, whilst it was still raining heavily and blowing a gale of wind: "The mate appears not to have gotten the better of his intemperance and has been exceeding impertinent so much so that I am inclined to turn him forward. This is not the first time or act of intemperance and impudence. It is now become almost time to put an end to it. From his conduct I am more than ever convinced he was accessory to the departure of the men and boat & is, I think, endeavourg to sow the seeds of dissension amongst the people."

But things were no happier aboard the other ship, for on the fourth day of January, Balleny saw signals of distress flying, so "went on board & found 3 men had deserted." But fortunately we have also the *Eliza Scott's* log, presumably kept by the Chief Mate, and we see the other side of the case. First with regard to the men: he writes under date of that same December 11th, "The Cooper in a most Mutinous Manner declared he had not sufficient to eat and with respect to Grog he said he considered it as much his as mine and that everyone in the ship had a right to an equal share." And on the next day,

"This Morng Smith the Yarmouth fisherman as he calls himself brought up the Bread Barge so heaped up as to run the risk of scattering the Contents and on my simply requesting him to be careful he was exceedingly Insolent and when he went forward the Carpenter exclaimed in loud voice that he was saucy and Independant and did not care a damn. It appears to me that the whole Crew are in a state of Mutiny or at least are endeavouring to make a Disturbance. . . ." But the Chief Mate's own account of that drink incident of Boxing Day is as brief as it is personal: "Strong Gales, at daylight let go the Second Anchor—Employed variously about the Rigging &c. N.B. at 3 the Captn struck the Mate before all hands on the Quarter deck for nothing."

Thus, what with troublesome mates and drunken crews and the ever-present possibility of losing several hands by desertion as long as the ship was at anchor, every whaling or sealing skipper had a merry old time. But friction was caused between shipmasters in consequence of the deserters joining up in another whaler. McNab instances the following letter which was sent by Captain Francis Neil, of the American whaler *Navy*, to Captain Bateman, of the British whaler *Cheviot*, who had been compelled to find some of his crew enticed away and had retaliated by seizing some of the *Navy's* boats. The letter at least shows that the American had a keen sense of justice, or rather of retribution.

"*Ship 'Navy,' Oct.* 7, 1836.
MANNA.[1]

"DEAR SIR,

"I received your letter of the 6th instant, and as you request my opinion in writing, tending the

[1] The name of an island.

loss you sustained by part of your crew deserting you and joining a shore party employed by ——— of Sydney, I am well aware that your men were taken from Cloudy Bay in the barque and to my certain knowledge distressed your ship much. It is my opinion had not these men been enticed from your vessel you would have had double the quantity of oil you now have, your crew being much reduced; but as Captain ——— told me there was 'no law in New Zealand' I commend you for having taken the boat as part payment for the injury sustained.

"I remains dear Sir
"Yours
"FRANCIS NEIL."

Off the New Zealand coast the whaling was done principally by vessels from the United Kingdom and America, but others came from Sydney and Hobart Town. It was because the whale had been hunted from the trade routes that vessels from London and New Bedford had been forced to come so far south, and this in turn suggested the industry to the two colonial towns mentioned, which enjoyed the advantage of being much nearer to these new whaling grounds. This meant, obviously, that the Australian whalers could spend a much longer period of their cruise in the actual localities where the cetacean was found: and a quicker return was made for the capital expended.

But the decadence which had set in with regard to English whaling and whaler skill prevented the Americans from having a serious rival down south during the period of the eighteen-thirties. In the year 1838 the merchants and shipowners whose vessels were not doing too well in the waters of Greenland and the Davis Straits petitioned the Treasury Lords that an investigation be made in the conditions of

the South Pacific whaling trade; for they alleged that for a considerable time whalebone had reached London which pretended to have been British caught yet was American or foreign. But, owing to it having a British certificate, it came into England without paying the duty of £94 a ton. It was suggested that British ships were meeting American whalers on the high seas, buying the whalebone, incorporating it in their own cargo and thus arriving with it in a port of the United Kingdom. And this complaint embraced the ships from Sydney and Hobart Town. There is undisputable evidence that American ships did actually sell whalebone to English ships, for such trafficking is recorded in at least one American whaler's log.

But all these jealousies and disputes between individuals and between the whalers of both nations were almost inevitable. The whale belonged definitely to no particular sea and to no particular nation or ship. The initiative was entirely to the cetacean, and wherever he chose to wander, thither the fleets had to follow irrespective of what flag they wore. Skippers naturally tried their best to keep secret the locality of their pet grounds: but just as to-day the trawlermen cannot preserve for long the secrecy of their newly found areas, so it was with the whalers. After a season or two there would be a squadron of ships where there had been one: and in the year following would come an entire fleet to pick up the wealth from the sea.

CHAPTER XI

WHALING ADVENTURES

IT was by no means unusual or an isolated incident for the harpooner as he stood there in the bows of the boat to be killed by the cachalot's tail sweeping through the air and cutting the boat off clean to the water's edge. One day about the beginning of the nineteenth century the British whaler *Perseverance* was off the Brazilian coast and her captain was out in one of the boats, and the cachalot had just been attacked, when the animal knocked the captain with his flukes out of the boat lifeless, killing at the same time one of the crew. The whale escaped, but, judging by the harpoons afterwards found in it, was destroyed by a boat from an American whaler.

On another occasion, at the end of August 1831, after the British whaler *Tuscan* in the North Pacific had sighted sperm whales, when the master and second mate had lowered their boats, there was left on board the chief mate in charge of the ship. This officer's name was Young. Presently, whilst attacking a large whale, the second mate's boat was so smashed by the whale that the other boat had to receive both crews and harpoon-line. Young, who had been watching the proceedings, now lowered his boat and came to assist. It was well known among whaling men that after a cachalot had been attacked, some other mammal in the same school would come to his fellow-creature's assistance, either by getting the line in his mouth and severing it, or by instituting a counter-attack.

Now in the present incident, whilst the cachalot was approaching his end, spouting blood and becoming more feeble, another of his breed came along and commenced to strike the boats with his flukes to aid his dying comrade. The fresh cachalot therefore now lashed his tail across both boats and swept Young out of his, throwing him a distance of forty yards, killing him instantaneously, besides doing injury to the boat itself. But the harpooned whale was killed, and the interfering cachalot went off with many lance wounds in him.

The sperm whale is notoriously gregarious, but when a lone cachalot is found, he is always an aged bull. A school of whales consists of from twenty to fifty and comprises cows, their young, and at least one bull of the largest size who acts as escort. A pod consists of young males. A body of whales is formed by two or more schools cruising in company, and are often seen making a passage towards a definite locality. Bennett, already quoted, to whom I am greatly indebted for much information obtained at first hand, says that when pierced by the harpoon the sperm whale will tow the boat at over fifteen miles an hour, but until struck the mammal will not average more than ten miles when pursued. The same authority mentions observing one cachalot which continued below the surface for fifty-five minutes. When whales are attacked, it is the females which render assistance to each other, but the males prefer to retreat from their injured comrades. There is not the slightest doubt that when a cachalot has been harpooned, other whales even miles away show their consciousness of the fact, make off or come down to assist, possibly informed by the transference of sound through the plunging antics of the angered whale. Sperm whales have been occasionally washed up on to British coasts, and during the recent war,

when some of us were on anti-submarine patrol off the Atlantic coast of Ireland, there were not a few occasions when a whale was reported as a German U-boat.

Sea travellers, especially in the old sailing-ships' days, have told strange tales, but there is a true and curious incident which occurred to a whaler named the *Foxhound* in the southern ocean about the year 1817, one day when most of the crew were below at dinner. One hand on deck heard a loud splashing and raised the alarm. Another went up into the rigging and saw something projecting from the ship's side: and this turned out to be the beak of a swordfish broken off, which after having penetrated right through the copper sheathing and solid timbers protruded for most of a foot within the hold. That portion on the outside was afterwards sawn off and a lead plate nailed over it. A few months later, when the *Foxhound* reached Sydney, it was found impossible to withdraw this portion of the swordfish, and there it remained until the ship reached England, when it had to be cut out.

Narrow escapes to individuals in such a vocation as whaling were inevitable: but it would be difficult for anyone to have a much nearer approach to death than that of the officer in charge of a boat engaged in killing a certain loose cachalot. The latter flung its flukes so close to the officer's head as to knock his hat off without doing further damage. Another whale actually bit in two the thick pole of a harpoon which had been fixed into the body of a companion. Nor was this an isolated occasion, for on another date when a cachalot had freed his mate by biting off the harpoon line, it became itself entangled in the line so that it could not escape but was killed by the lance without having been harpooned. All the same, the creature put up a magnificent fight,

and one blow from his flukes nearly broke off the stem and hurled the crew into the sea. On yet another day, a whale after smashing the boat with his flukes gave the crew an unpleasant time whilst keeping his jaw immediately over their heads for some very long moments. And this jaw extended fourteen and a half feet, or over half the length of the boat; for they measured it on deck later, when the whale had given them three more hours of hunting before it was killed.

It was characteristic of some sperm whales that they preferred rather to attack with their jaws than their tail, and would rush open-mouthed against the boat in an endeavour to crush it with their teeth, for this purpose turning and swimming on the back. There have been boats' crews so alarmed by this that they have leapt into the water and remained there until the danger had passed. Just ninety years ago a fighting whale turned round to attack the boats, injured them, and chased them right back to the ship, where it remained for some time in spite of the lances which were hurled at it.

Many people who read the wonderful voyage of Captain Slocum round the world alone will remember the occasion when his vessel was invaded by undesirable natives and he managed to frighten them away by scattering tacks along the deck, which were trodden on by the bare-footed people with instantaneous effect. But this was a device that Slocum must have learnt from old lore; for there was a whaler named the *Syren* one day off the Pellew Islands, and the boats were chasing a whale, when the natives came aboard in their craft so threateningly as to drive the remainder of the crew aloft. Now one of these men then remembered that a packet of tintacks had been left in the top for some purpose, and he now proceeded to strew them about the deck.

The immediate result was that the natives became terrified from the soles of their feet upwards, and screamingly dived into the sea.

I believe that the first time an Englishman ever saw the American flag flying was aboard a whaler, and that was a vessel named the *Bedford*, which came into English waters via the Downs one February day with 487 butts of whale oil. A contemporary periodical alluded to her as "American built and manned wholly by American seamen. She wears the rebel colours and belongs to Nantucket." A few days later there arrived in English waters the whaler *Industry*. But one of the most famous whaling ships ever built is the *James Arnold*, launched in New Bedford as far back as 1852. Indeed she is one of the most remarkable craft ever built, and she is a connecting link with the days of romance and the present mechanical age. For between the month of May 1853 and the month of October 1894 this fine old vessel made a dozen long whaling voyages—sometimes a cruise lasting for over four years—and during this entire period of over forty years' work brought home to her owners as much oil and whalebone as sold for 876,425 dollars; or, reckoning five dollars to the pound, she netted £175,285. Now in the year 1894 the price of oil dropped to 56 cents a gallon, so in the following March her owners sold her for £1,000. She was then fitted out at New Bedford and sailed to Chili, where she commenced a second career. Ever since she has been under the Chilian flag she has made whaling voyages each year, with a brief interlude as a merchantman, and is still engaged catching whales in the old-fashioned manner with harpoon and lance. Her catch has averaged twelve hundred barrels, and in twenty-six whaling years sailing out of Valparaiso she has made for her new owners about £70,000. Thus, up to date, the

James Arnold has produced the magnificent sum of £245,285 from whaling alone. This, I think, is a record which must take some beating.

The neighbourhood of New Bedford has by long tradition been the home of whaling ships and whaling skippers. Therefore, as long as they lasted, the *James Arnold* had a New Bedford captain even after passing under the Chilian flag. But now this fine race of whaling masters has died out, so the old ship is navigated by a Chilian skipper, yet the actual whaling operations of killing are carried out by sailors educated in the art by New Bedford men. Constructed of oak and copper fastened, this three-masted ship, with her old-time band of white running round the hull and the black, square ports, keeps up the continuity of an industry that has seen revolutionary changes in ships and methods. Her gross tonnage is a little more than 345, length 115 ft., beam 27.6 ft., depth 17.6 ft., and in spite of all these seventy-odd years of wandering over the waters of the globe she is still tight and staunch, and the oldest whaling ship in the world that is actively engaged in the business.

The *James Arnold* was built by the brothers Jethro and Zachariah Hillman, and there used to be a saying that a Hillman ship never leaked. Well, these same New Bedford builders in the year 1841 launched the whaling barque *Charles W. Morgan*, and she exists to this day, though not actively. At the moment of writing she is receiving that honour and preservation which she richly deserves. Just as the *Victory* in England has recently been transformed into a kind of Nelson shrine commemorative of the last of the three-deckers, so the American nation are treating the *Charles W. Morgan*. Last autumn, after the hurricane which wrecked the whaler *Wanderer* on the Cuttyhunk rocks, the *Charles W. Morgan* was left as the

last American whaler afloat, although she had not engaged in that industry since 1906.

Like the *James Arnold*, this *Charles W. Morgan* is square sterned in accordance with the contemporary design, copper fastened and copper sheathed. In the latter part of her career she used to sail for many years from San Francisco to the North Pacific and Japanese whaling grounds. But it was the competition of the modern steam whalers which proved too keen for her, and she came back to the Atlantic. For most of twenty years she lay secured to a wharf at Fairhaven, opposite New Bedford, yet was occasionally taken to sea on behalf of the moving-picture business. But thanks to the enormous interest concerning old ships which is now being shown by America, the *Charles W. Morgan* was acquired in 1924 and a concrete crib was built for her to be floated into for the last time from the sea, and thus remain as an interesting and perfect example of what a real whaling ship looked like; for in a very short time otherwise, who will be alive to speak authentically? So it was decided to refit her according to the original sail plan; for she began her career as a full-rigged ship but in 1867 was cut down to a barque. Certain of the parts salved from the wrecked *Wanderer* were used in refitting the *Charles W. Morgan*, and thus it will now be possible for posterity to consider in actuality three of the most famous sailing ships of a glorious age restored to their correct rig: the *Victory* at Portsmouth, the *Cutty Sark* at Falmouth, and the *Charles W. Morgan* near New Bedford. In these three vessels we perceive the romance of the sea handed down for others to enjoy and be inspired. And if only we possessed an old East Indiaman to make up the quartette, we might rest assured that the glamour of an ancient glory would never be forgotten.

The *James Arnold* and the *Bartholomew Gosnold* discovered a new whaling ground off New Zealand, and for several years worked it until the secret came out. This *James Arnold* has led a charmed life, for there are some ships which always seem to cheat disaster, just as in the Great War certain vessels blundered over and over again through minefields and submarine zones without the slightest incident. When the American Civil War broke out, the *James Arnold* was sent into the Atlantic, and although the rebel cruisers in 1862 and the following year destroyed twenty or thirty whaling ships, the *James Arnold* was never captured. It is a commentary on the change in the affairs of whaling that when this vessel was built, there were over six hundred whaling ships and barques and over sixty brigs and schooners engaged as whalers. But in the year that she passed under the Chilian flag these numbers had dropped to forty-seven ships and barques and twenty-five schooners. By the year 1923 there were not more than a dozen of the old-fashioned sort under sail and employing the time-honoured methods.

The loss of the *Wanderer* was on this wise. That fine old barque, which was the last American-owned whaler to sail on a whaling cruise, was lying with all stores on board at the State Pier, New Bedford, on Monday, August 25, 1924, and at 9 a.m. the tug hauled her into the channel and she was headed south to Mischaum Point at the entrance to Buzzards Bay. Here she anchored whilst her captain went back on the tug to collect the rest of his crew. The glass was falling slowly but surely. Now that evening it came on to blow hard from the N.E., and throughout Tuesday there was the worst storm known for about seventy years, so that it reached hurricane force, destroying on land trees

and buildings, whilst wrecking a number of boats.

Wanderer parted her heaviest cable, and then dragged her second anchor as the wind had gone round to the N.W. She was carried across to the island of Cuttyhunk and piled up on the rocks, and thus another historic ship came to an untimely end. I have had the privilege of seeing some unique photographs, which were courteously sent to me by Dr. J. Richard Taylor, of Fairhaven. It happened that as the *Wanderer* was leaving on her last journey, Dr. Taylor was about in his motor cruiser, and the first picture showed the *Wanderer* leaving the State Pier at 9 a.m. with a tug secured to the barque's starboard side. Another picture showed the tug towing the whaler past Fort Rodman, and she was shown again at 10.50 a.m. just before anchoring off Mischaum Point. These most interesting wreck pictures portray her as she appeared when the gale had left her on the rocks of Cuttyhunk Island. This island, by the way, has a stone tower memorial which is of great historical interest to all who think about the sea. The name of Bartholomew Gosnold we mentioned just now as being commemorated in a whaler. But the original Gosnold carries us right back to the time when Queen Elizabeth was recently dead.

For it was on Lady Day, 1602, that Captain Bartholomew Gosnold in command of the ships *Concord* and *Dartmouth* sailed from Falmouth, crossed the Atlantic from England to North America and coasted along the east and south shore of Cape Cod, and landed at what is now called Cuttyhunk Island on May 24th. Here he built a house and "a little fort," but giving up the settlement sailed for England on June 17th, reaching Exmouth on July 23rd. Gosnold thus formed the first English settlement in New England, and his is now the name of the town-

ship in which Cuttyhunk lies. Thus, by a chain of incidents, the spot which the *Wanderer* finally chose as her resting-place, after roaming over the seven seas, now has become doubly historic in the realm of maritime events.

CHAPTER XII

THE PERSONAL ELEMENT

IT used to be the custom—certainly among the whalers of the Greenland and Davis Straits—after the whale had been brought alongside the ship for the harpooners, before getting to work on the animal's dissection, to arm their feet with spurs. This was in order to prevent their slipping, and Scoresby relates a curious accident which he once witnessed in this connection.

Attending on these men were usually a couple of boats with one or two boys, who would be ready to pass along the harpooners' knives, blubber-spades and so on. Boat-hooks would naturally be used for holding on to the dead animal. Now whilst these harpooners were busy flensing, and one of these men was standing on the whale's jaw-bone, a lad in the boat clumsily and accidentally, whilst keeping the craft alongside, thrust the point of his boat-hook through the ring of the harpooner's spur and simultaneously hooked on to the jaw-bone. The harpooner presently found himself in the water and held by the foot. He managed to catch hold of the boat's gunwale, but by this time the point had been reached when the blubber and whalebone had been extracted and the carcase was just being let go. And the position now was that the unfortunate expert was fastened to this sinking carcase.

It seemed only a question of a few seconds before carcase would pull man below the surface of the sea, and he was just about to let go the gunwale

when some of his shipmates threw a rope round his body. With all that weight suspended from him, the harpooner was in great agony, but what he feared most was that he might be dragged below: so in spite of his pain he shouted to his pals to haul away at the rope, and this was the actual means of saving him, for eventually the carcase was hooked with a grapnel and the man was freed. But he had been quite as near to death as it is possible for any human to approach.

These harpooners at work separating the blubber fat worked under the direction of the specksioneer, or head fat-cutter, the expert of experts on the subject of whales. But if in the seventeenth-century Dutch whalers the specksioneer (or more correctly the "specksynder") was in supreme control of a whaler, and the captain was a mere sailing master, just as in the sixteenth century expeditions were under the leadership of a landsman, the British Greenland whaling ships of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were under the command of seafaring captains and the specksioneer was merely a senior harpooner and not in supreme command. It is interesting as showing that the handling and navigation of the ship were considered of greater importance than expert knowledge of the whales themselves. But it is also a fact that in the course of years the sailing master had amassed all the available information about whales, their cruising grounds, and their habits, and the methods of hunting them. In the American early nineteenth-century whalers the specksioneer was of greater authority than in contemporary British ships and sometimes took charge of the deck. For this reason, as support to his authority, the specksioneer lived apart from the crew. In the modern steam whalers, dealt with towards the end of this volume, we find

that the twentieth-century practice is rather to give back to the harpooner, or gunner, that supremacy of place which he occupied three hundred years ago. Divided authority always has its drawbacks, and so long as the sailing master is responsible for his ship and the harpooner cares only for getting the maximum of whales it is conceivable that there will be a clashing of wills sooner or later. On the grounds of discipline and unity of purpose there is everything to be said for the principle of captain and specksioneer being one and the same person.

For the purpose of overcoming the jealousies and arguments, the disputes and violent quarrels on the whaling grounds it became necessary for the Dutch during the seventeenth century to impose on their ships drastic regulations, which had to be subscribed to by every captain, specksioneer and officer. In the British Arctic whalers the official Government regulations were not necessary, for the custom of the industry was usually respected, although litigation did sometimes arise, of which an instance has been given in another chapter. But there were two plain and simple traditions which in actual practice had the value of laws. Firstly, there was the question of a whale which had been harpooned or fastened. This was the most fruitful source of animosity: for harpoons from two or more boats, all of different ships, might penetrate the whale, especially in the case of a long and difficult hunt. The first boat would naturally claim the whale as his, and the last boat of all, who finally had brought about the animal's death, might insist that the prize was his. In order to avoid such disputes the British custom of the sea was that a whale which had been fastened, or in any way was in possession of a boat, belonged to that boat which maintains connection or possession, no matter whether the whale were dead or alive.

Secondly, a whale that was loose and unfastened, dead or alive, was fair game for all; but there were occasions when this last-mentioned custom presented difficulties. Supposing, for example, that a ship's boat had been hunting a certain whale all day, harpooned him, been towed for many miles by him, and then with the oncoming of night and owing to the distance from the ship, it had become necessary to cut the line. What then? Next day, or perhaps weeks later, some other ship might find that whale many miles away but with the harpoon still in him, and the name of the ship on that harpoon. Perhaps the whale might be harpooned again and chased for a long while and then killed. Whose was that whale? Did it belong to the ship whose harpoon had been identified? Or did the spoil go to the final vessel?

The following is an instance which occurred in the Greenland fishery. Several whalers were beating to windward along the edge of the ice, the vessels being under easy sail, for it was blowing a gale accompanied by snow. But when the wind and snow eased up and the ships made towards the ice, two vessels, distant from each other about a mile, both sighted a dead whale within some loose ice. Now, since this whale was not "fastened" she was fair game for either ship, and there ensued a keen race as to which should reach the animal first. But the two vessels were most evenly matched, and there was no such thing as superiority in their sailing ability. So keen was the contest that each captain had hopes of harpooning without lowering boats, and in the bows of both ships was standing an officer ready to let drive his harpoon so soon as the whale was reached.

Now it must have been apparent that two evenly matched sailing ships both heading for the same small object in a big sea would converge and collide. This indeed happened when within a few yards of

the whale, and actually the shock was so violent that bow struck bow with such force that the two craft rebounded. Harpoons were hurled at the whale but fell short. And then a keen seaman who was second mate of the lee ship dived overboard into those bitterly cold waters, swam off to the whale, seized its fin and announced to the world that the prize was his. It was a plucky if somewhat foolish act: for he found himself unable to climb up and had to remain shivering in that Arctic water. Somehow in the excitement and joy that the other vessel had been outwitted, this second mate's captain neglected to worry about his officer's unpleasant predicament hanging on to the dead whale. Instead of at once lowering a boat, the skipper was more concerned with mooring his whaler to a suitable piece of ice.

But in the meantime ship number two had tacked and the master of her had lowered a boat, got into it and rowed off to the solitary mariner still hanging on to the dead whale. So he called to the mate, whose shivering hand was still on the fin. "Well? You've got a fine fish there," said the skipper. "Yes," agreed the unhappy mate. "But don't you find it very cold?" asked the captain, beholding the livid lips. "Yes, I do," answered the mate. "And I'm almost starved: I wish you'd let me come into your boat until ours arrives." "Certainly," approved the charitable but wide-awake skipper. The boat was rowed alongside the whale, and, in fact, the man was assisted on board the boat with the greatest enthusiasm.

But immediately afterwards the clever old skipper struck a harpoon into the carcase of the whale, hoisted his flag and claimed it as his prize; for it was now loose and was anyone's property until this moment. There was no question as to the right of the new owner, nor was it even disputed. But skipper number one was wild with anger when he realized

the trick which had been played. There remained nothing to be done except to see several hundred golden sovereigns' worth of whale going aboard his rival ship, and then he turned round and cursed his over-gallant mate for having been such a fool as to let go of that fin. There are, indeed, times when one is praised less for bravery than for astuteness. But I presume that mate would in future leave daring enterprise to others who thought nothing of the encouragement by gratitude.

Whaling could not be learnt in a few weeks or even a season: and especially was this true of the Greenland industry, where the conditions of ice and weather were difficult problems. Experience, judgment, perseverance, seamanship, good navigational ability and that indescribable special fisherman-sense which is able to know where the fish are: these were the qualities which went to make the successful whaler captain. Seamanship was perhaps more important than at first consideration you might imagine. When there was such similarity of build in these more or less standardized ships, there was not a great deal of difference in the respective speeds: therefore the personal element came into the matter. After the fleet had penetrated up the Davis Straits, for example, and been prevented from advancing owing to the obstructing ice, there might one day show itself a narrow opening just big enough for a skilful skipper to work his ship through. If he could do this before the sea was ready for the general advance, then he would have the pick of the sea, he would get whales and possibly fill up his holds before the other ships could sail through. Taking whaling as a whole, success depended far more on the captain's character and skill, and next on his harpooners, than on the ship herself. The first thing requisite was whaling knowledge: but when the

captain had brought his ship to the right area, the rest depended on the look-outs and the harpooners.

Seamen are singularly child-like: and whaler crews were of this sort, too. If they began to lose confidence in the "old man" or in the harpooner's skill, they would lose all heart in the cruise, become discouraged, lack spirit, and consequently would allow golden opportunities to pass by. Thus, bad officers would ruin any whaling vessel, and she would come home, if not "clean," at any rate with an indifferent cargo. On the other hand, nothing succeeds like success, and nothing gave the men greater confidence than the capture of several whales by clever harpooning. It satisfied them that the harpooner knew his business and was worthy of their assistance, it encouraged them as they reflected on the monetary reward which was accumulating; and it assured them that should the animal's tail one day give them a stove boat, it would be just one of those inevitable accidents of their calling. If one of the boat's crew had the misfortune to get his foot foul of the harpoon line after the whale had been struck, then it was just a case of "his own b——y fault" that for the rest of his life he would not have a complete pair of feet.

But had this happened in a boat whose harpooner was "gallied," nervous or inexperienced, then that crew would have been ruined for the rest of the voyage, the incident would be discussed in the fo'c'sle, and even the best of the other boats' crews would become infected with just that spirit which prevents success. Thus it was the personal element which mattered most in whaling.

CHAPTER XIII

THE WAY THEY HAD IN THE WHALERS

JUST as in this first quarter of the twentieth century we are at pains to get together every possible detail of the dying sailing ship—there are but four canvas-driven ocean-goers at the time of writing that still fly the Red Ensign—before the last of a fine race disappears from existence; so with the passing of the sailing whaler and the establishment of the steam "catcher" it is meet that we should set down all those items which illustrate the life and methods of the old-time vessels. And in this chapter we shall not confine ourselves to the routine of the northern whalers.

The crude harpoon-gun which was in existence at the beginning of the nineteenth century had been improved by a gunsmith at Hull, though between 1772 and the next twenty years the Society of Arts had by giving premiums to whaler-men and others tried to encourage improvements both in the gun and the harpoon itself. But the Hull evolution had produced a weapon with an inch-and-seven-eighths bore, the gun being about two feet long, of wrought iron and working on a swivel. A special arrangement was devised to lessen its liability to miss fire. The shank of the harpoon was double, ending in a knob which fitted the bore of the gun. This gun could fire its harpoon about forty yards, but owing to the difficulty in working this gun it was never in

universal use and the old-fashioned method of hurling the hand harpoon continued to be employed even long after Svend Foyn introduced his new gun and system.

The whaling gear was overhauled and fitted on the voyage out to the whaling grounds. The four fathoms of 2¼-inch hemp of the "foregoer" or "foreganger" was now spliced to the harpoon's shank, every harpoon being stamped with the name of the ship and the master, so that there could be no question as to which ship had a right to any particular cetacean, for there was a good deal of jealousy and argument bound to arise when more than one ship's boats had fastened to the same whale. Great care was taken of the harpoon's point, and after it had been sharpened and cleaned it was protected by a bit of oiled paper or canvas.

The complete outfit for each of the boats consisted of a couple of harpoons, at least a dozen lances, five to seven oars, a "jack" or flag on a pole as a signal that the whale had been harpooned; a tail-knife for making holes in the animal's tail through which the towing rope could be passed after he was killed; a rest in which the stock of the ready-to-use harpoon was supported at the bow; an axe for cutting the line, a bucket for bailing or for wetting the line; a snatch-block, grapnel, boat-hooks, mallet, swab, grommets and one or two other items. It was in the bigger (six-oared) boats that the harpoon-gun was ever carried, and these craft also were fitted with a winch for hauling in the lines after the whale had been fastened. In these whaling boats you never saw a rudder: steering was always done by means of a long oar. Why was this? The answer is that speed was of the utmost importance, and everyone well knows that as soon as you put your helm over in a boat, the rudder acts as a drag. Many an inex-

perienced coxswain in a modern eight-oared racing craft has learnt this to his cost.

And this long steering oar was convenient for getting the boat round when the rowers were at rest. But generally for quickly sculling the boat out of a narrow gat where the ice would not allow of oars; for quick manœuvring, and for approaching the whale without making that noise inseparable from several blades being dipped—this stern oar was essential. Each whaling ship split up its crew into as many divisions as she carried boats: but when the ship was making a passage the crew were divided into two watches in the usual manner.

The whaling service had its standard of efficiency, and in its own way it was unique. In regard to boatmanship, quite apart from general seamanship, this standard has seldom been equalled. Thus if the vessel were already cruising in an area where whales could be expected, the boats were always ready for immediate use, hanging from their davits or cranes, complete with all stores, and within one minute of the order being given after the sighting of the whale, at least two boats properly manned could be in the water. Every sailor to-day would admit that this showed first-class organization and discipline up to a point. In the crow's nest, whilst cruising about the whale area, was one of the officers, or even sometimes the captain himself with his telescope sweeping the sea. If the fish sighted were large, then two boats were sent: if there were more than one whale, then more than two boats were ordered away; and when every boat had been sent off the ship was said to have "a loose fall."

Such was the zeal for efficiency that when cruising in fine weather and whales were expected at any hour, a boat might be already in the water towing astern. Greenhorns in these boats with little ex-

perience in rowing were sure of many cursings and several impressive blows on the head from the officer in charge: for smooth, steady rowing without catching "crabs" was essential. "There were two greenies in each boat," mentions the late Frank T. Bullen, from whose classic, *The Cruise of the Cachalot*, we have quoted more than once, "they being so arranged that whenever one of them 'caught a crab,' which of course was about every other stroke, his failure made little difference to the boat's progress. They learned very fast under the terrible imprecations and storms of blows from the iron-fisted and iron-hearted officers."

Elsewhere in these pages I have spoken of the whale as elusive: this adjective exactly fits him. Scoresby says "that a whale seldom abides longer on the surface of the water than two minutes, that it generally remains from five to ten or fifteen minutes under water, that in this interval it sometimes moves through the space of half a mile or more, and that the fisher has very rarely any certain intimation of the place in which it will appear." Still, an experienced harpooner considered himself successful if his whale reappeared within a couple of hundred yards. But just as in the case of the modern submarine, so the whale under way, submerged just below the surface, leaves an eddy in his progress. The hand-harpoon was effective at a range of not more than ten yards: the old-fashioned harpoon-gun at about thirty yards. The head was impenetrable, so it was never aimed at.

Bullen's service aboard a whaler was from 1875 onwards, and he has left behind invaluable information concerning the life aboard one of those New Bedford vessels. But Herman Melville in his *Moby Dick* based his yarn on his whaling voyage aboard the *Acushnet* in the eighteen-forties: and his vivid

description of the lowering of these boats is too precious not to be quoted.

" 'There she blows! there! there! there! she blows! she blows!'

" 'Where-away?'

" 'On the lee-beam, about two miles off! a school of them.'

"Instantly all was commotion.

"The sperm whale blows as a clock ticks, with the same undeviating and reliable uniformity. And thereby whalemen distinguish this fish from other tribes of his genus.

" 'There go flukes!' was now the cry from Tashtego; and the whales disappeared.

" 'Quick, steward!' cried Ahab. 'Time! time!'

"Dough-Boy hurried below, glanced at the watch, and reported the exact minute to Ahab. The ship was now kept away from the wind, and she went gently rolling before it. Tashtego reporting that the whales had gone down heading to leeward, we confidently looked to see them again directly in advance of our bows. . . . One of the men selected for ship-keepers—that is, those not appointed to the boats, by this time relieved the Indian at the mainmast head. The sailors at the fore and mizzen had come down; the line tubs were fixed in their places; the cranes were thrust out; the mainyard was backed, and the three boats swung over the sea like three samphire baskets over high cliffs. Outside of the bulwarks their eager crews with one hand clung to the rail, while one foot was expectantly poised on the gunwale. So look the long line of man-of-war's men about to throw themselves on board an enemy's ship. . . .

" 'All ready there, Fedallah?'

" 'Ready,' was the half-hissed reply.

" 'Lower away, then: d'ye hear?' shouting across the deck. 'Lower away there, I say.'

". . . The men sprang over the rail: the sheaves whirled round in the blocks; with a wallow, the three boats dropped into the sea; while, with a dexterous, off-handed daring, unknown in any other vocation, the sailors, goat-like, leaped down the rolling ship's side into the tossed boats below.

"Hardly had they pulled out from under the ship's lee, when a fourth keel, coming from the windward side, pulled round under the stern, and showed the five strangers rowing; Ahab, who standing erect in the stern, loudly hailed Starbuck, Stubb, and Flask to spread themselves widely, so as to cover a large expanse of water.

"And then the exhortations of the officer to urge the crew to row towards the whale, which had now come into sight again, blowing right ahead:

" 'Pull, pull, my fine hearts alive; pull, my children; pull, my little ones,' drawlingly and soothingly sighed Stubb to his crew. . . . 'Why don't you break your backbones, my boys? What is it you stare at? Those chaps in yonder boat? Tut! They are only five more hands come to help us—never mind from where—the more the merrier. Pull, then, do pull: never mind the brimstone—devils are good fellows enough. So, so; there you are now; that's the stroke for a thousand pounds; that's the stroke to sweep the stakes! Hurrah for the gold cup of sperm oil, my heroes! Three cheers, men—all hearts alive! Easy, easy; don't be in a hurry—don't be in a hurry. Why don't you snap your oars, you rascals? Bite something, you dogs! So, so, so, then; softly, softly. That's it—that's it! long and strong. Give way there, give way! The devil fetch ye, ye ragamuffin rapscallions; ye are all asleep. Stop snoring, ye sleepers, and pull. Pull, will ye? pull, can't ye? pull, won't ye? Why in the name of gudgeons and gingercakes don't ye pull? pull and break something! pull,

and start your eyes out! Here!" whipping out the sharp knife from his girdle; 'every mother's son of ye draw his knife, and pull with the blade between his teeth. That's it—that's it. Now ye do something; that looks like it, my steel-bits. Start her—start her, my silver spoons! Start her, marling-spikes!' "

Yes: there was something personal, very human, inspiring and thrilling in those fine boat hunts which used to go on from these old ships during the longest voyages which were ever made by men. Melville refers to the life aboard the Nantucket whalers with their sharing-out system of remuneration, their common luck, their common vigilance as tending in some cases "to beget a less rigorous discipline than in merchantmen generally; yet, never mind how much like an old Mesopotamian family these whalemen may, in some primitive instances, live together; for all that, the punctilious externals, at least, of the quarter-deck are seldom materially relaxed, and in no instance done away. Indeed, many are the Nantucket ships in which you will see the skipper parading his quarter-deck with an exalted grandeur not surpassed in any military navy; nay, extorting almost as much outward homage as if he wore the imperial purple, and not the shabbiest of pilot-cloth."

Scoresby says that during the capture of a whale, the line would with its friction sometimes cut a groove in the bollard about an inch deep and therefore they used to put a plate of brass, or iron, or lignum vitæ where the line passed over the stem, otherwise in one season's successful whaling the boat would be cut right through to the water's edge. A really experienced harpooner was always careful not to have too many turns round that bollard. Sometimes it was a great temptation so to do, when the whale was apparently never going to cease his pro-

gress. The harpooner naturally desired to retard the animal and to increase the drag by not slackening up the line: but too many turns sometimes meant that the line would get entangled, it could not be eased off when an obstacle of ice came across the boat's path. Then suddenly the boat would be drawn beneath the ice, or smashed to small pieces of wood —unless an axe was able to be applied in time.

Not even the greatest expert could ever say how long a period would elapse between the harpooning of the whale and the final capture. Scoresby says that the average time was not exceeding an hour, but he himself remembered the occasion when it took twenty-eight minutes; and another when after sixteen hours the whale actually escaped from its line. But, apart from the ice, the worst enemy of the Arctic whalers was that succession of thick fogs which were to be expected in June and July. Not merely did they endanger the ships, but they interfered seriously with the actual whaling operations. Even if the animal were fastened, the boat would be towed immediately away from the ship's sight and the boatmen lose all sense of direction and distance. The ship's bell or horn could signal for a certain distance: but if the boat were beyond the hearing of a gun, then both shipmaster and boat's officer had every reason to become anxious. A gale frequently follows in the wake of a fog: but up there hunger was always waiting to follow the biting cold. Death from either or both was always threatening.

The persistency of some whales is well illustrated by an incident which happened to a boat in June of 1812 when the Whitby whaler *Resolution* had reached her northern hunting-ground. The boat had fastened the whale when close to the edge of a small ice-floe, and then a second boat came along with her

lines and bent on to those of the first. The whale was towing so furiously that it seemed likely to pull the boat's bows under. Two or three men went aft but the stern was still well out of the water, and the harpooner was enveloped in the smoke of the line's friction round the bollard so that he was invisible. Finally the bow of the boat was pulled below the sea, but the crew leapt overboard and succeeded in getting on the ice.

The whale was still visible, and now there occurred the strange phenomenon of the ships themselves working their way through the tricky ice channels and going off in a general chase: for the animal already was anyone's property who was able to capture it. The boats in the neighbourhood also chased and within an hour three harpoons were fixed, but the whale now making his way below a large floe, drew all the lines out of the second boat that was fast: and since the latter's officer could get no further assistance, he secured his line to a hummock, but the line broke. There still remained two boats fast, and they were both dragged, in this mad advance, against a floe and one of the harpoons drew out. That left one boat still being towed, but with six or eight lines out.

There followed a species of excitement which made a sensitive nature almost delirious: for the whale next went blundering through great blocks of ice with the boat astern, and occasionally the stout line would get hung up, then with a twang suddenly slip clear, and with the speed of a bird the boat would rush forward over ice, into the water again, and then the onrush would continue. Finally the sportive mammal was seen towing only the sunken boat and any amount of line, but the drag of nearly four miles of ropes and immersed craft must have been something tremendous. Thanks to a good

breeze, the ship was able to chase under all sail, and after nine miles from the spot, the vessel came up and sent a couple of spare boats off. But one of the harpooners unskilfully allowed the whale to see the boat approaching, and after resting awhile it made off in alarm. However, the boats were placed at suitable points, the whale rose and was promptly harpooned three times more in addition to being lanced vigorously, so that finally it was killed after a magnificent display of pluck and persistence. Altogether this animal had taken out six miles of line and sunk one boat.

It is this side of whaling—the virile drama between men of the sea and the leviathan of the deep—that gives the work a thrill which is absent in most other occupations. Rapid thinking, quick judgment, active limbs; dexterous management of harpoon, of lines, and of boat itself were essential. It was a battle of wits as well as of courage, with such items as fog and ice to make the contest more varied; and the big monetary reward always being dangled ahead of the men in the boat. In other kinds of fishing there are dangers of varying degree, but chiefly in respect of weather alone. In whale-catching the excitement, the risks, the cool nerve required in the days of sail can be compared only with big-game hunting on land. In describing his first whale, Bullen mentions the horror with which he realized, after having harpooned the whale, that "down went the nose of the boat almost under the water, while at the mate's order everybody scrambled aft into the elevated stern sheets. The line sang quite a tune as it was grudgingly allowed to surge round the logger-head, filling one with admiration at the strength shown by such a small rope. This sort of thing went on for about twenty minutes, in which time we quite emptied the large tub and began on the small one. . . .

Mr. Cruce, the second mate, had got a whale and was doing his best to kill it; but he was severely handicapped by his crew, or rather had been, for two of them were now temporarily incapable of either good or harm. They had gone quite 'batchy' with fright, requiring a not too gentle application of the tiller to their heads in order to keep them quiet. The remedy, if rough, was effectual, for the 'subsequent proceedings interested them no more.' "

CHAPTER XIV

IN THE SOUTHERN SEAS

BY the year 1849 British whaling had reached a very low level, ship after ship having given up, and only fourteen vessels under that flag being so employed. But then Charles Enderby, a British merchant, a Fellow of the Royal Society, and the greatest authority in the country on the southern whaling industry, made a big effort to remedy this.

Enderby's family name is, like other pioneers in the whaling enterprise, connected with exploration, and perpetuated by that Antarctic, desolate district known as Enderby Land, which was visited in 1831 by Captain Biscoe in one of the ships owned by Enderby's firm. It was this same Biscoe, by the way, who visited in 1832 the west coast of Graham Land, which to-day is such an important whaling neighbourhood. Now in the years from 1839 to 1843 Sir James Clark Ross (nephew of Sir John Ross who explored Baffin's Bay) was in command of that *Erebus* and *Terror* expedition into the Antarctic Seas, and in 1847 he published his *Voyage of Discovery and Research in the Southern and Antarctic Seas*.

It was in the same year this volume appeared that Charles Enderby published his pamphlet, which caused a great deal of interest in England. Ross had made a lengthy stay at the Auckland Islands in 1840 and reported that "in the whole range of the vast Southern Ocean no spot could be found combining so completely the essential requisites for a fixed whaling station." Enderby seized on this idea, and

formed a corporation called the Southern Whale Fishery Company. The object was partly commercial, and partly patriotic. For the British whaling industry was moribund. Between 1838 and 1845 the produce of the American whale fishery had, on the contrary, averaged 37,459 tuns, but during 1845 it had risen to 43,064 tuns or the equivalent of £1,420,447, whereas in that year the entire British whaling whether in the north or in the South Seas did not amount to more than 5,564 tuns, or £249,181: and there was the further point that those eighteen thousand seamen in American vessels were a very fine national asset. Enderby's attitude was, therefore, this: If we can only believe Ross we can revive the southern whaling industry, we can cease depending on America for our whale produce, and at the same time we shall be raising up a fine seamanhood, which is very much to be desired on patriotic grounds.

The arguments, therefore, were almost identical with those of Elking in regard to the Dutch a hundred and twenty-five years previously. Just as then Holland possessed almost the monopoly, so now it was in the hands of America. Such arguments as these not infrequently succeed in obtaining support, and because Britain owned but fourteen whalers, and the good feeling which to-day exists between the two countries was then largely that of suspicion and jealousy, Enderby's proposition was well received by statesmen, the peerage, the Royal Navy, and by the leading merchants of the City of London. His plan was to have a whaling station formed at those uninhabited Auckland Islands which lie a hundred and eighty miles south of New Zealand, and had been discovered only as recently as 1806. A small fleet of whalers should be built and sailed out, Enderby's plan being to create a settlement at that out-of-the-way spot. Obviously it would be

impossible for the whaling fleet to bring back the produce, but the intention was that these ships should operate solely in those southern waters, land their oil at Auckland Islands, refit, and then go off on a further cruise. For transportation of the produce from here they would rely on those sailing ships visiting Australia and New Zealand, which would be glad of the oil freight to take back to England.

The British Government became more than interested, gave their full approval, and in fact granted in 1849 a Royal Charter of Incorporation to the company which Enderby formed, the capital being fixed at £100,000. This national undertaking, which was to prevent the nation's dependence on America for its whale produce, and to employ so many seamen, somehow appealed very strongly to the early Victorians. A big public dinner was given to Enderby in April of that year, presided over by Rear-Admiral J. W. D. Dundas, C.B., M.P., attended by Government Ministers, merchants of the City of London, ship-owners and so on. The usual laudatory speeches were made, and Enderby was spoken of as about to make what was really a voyage of discovery. "Whoever had paid attention to the commerce of this country," said Mr. Labouchere in his speech, "could not but regret that so important a branch of trade as the Southern Whale Fisheries should have been suffered by this country to decline, and to be almost entirely transferred to the United States of America."

It showed Enderby's own belief in the scheme that he elected to go out with that expedition personally, and he was sure that if the British Whaling Industry was to be re-established, this was the means of doing it. The old-fashioned method of a vessel going on a three-and-a-half years' cruise and carrying her accumulated cargo about with her seemed to Enderby disadvantageous. So the Southern Whale

Fishery Company was given a good send-off, the Government had made a grant of these Auckland Islands to Enderby and his two brothers, he himself being made Lieutenant-Governor. Two ships, the *Samuel Enderby* of 395 registered tons, and the *Fancy* of 321 tons, set forth from England in August 1849, Charles Enderby himself being in one of them, and reached the Auckland Islands in December. In the former was a crew of picked men, but in the other ships no such precaution was taken. The *Brisk* of 265 tons sailed soon after these two, and among the fleet eventually got out there were the *Sir Edward Parry*, *Sir James Ross*, *The Earl of Hardwicke*, *Lord Nelson* and *Lord Duncan*.

But in spite of all that enthusiasm of the public dinner, in spite of all that had been prophesied, this scheme turned out a failure and the whaling was eventually abandoned, not without a certain amount of bad feeling and recrimination between Enderby and the Court of Directors, who eventually sent out a couple of representatives to supersede Enderby. There were mutual charges of mismanagement, the company exhausted the whole of its capital and the Aucklands station was abandoned after twenty months' occupation. Port Ross had been this pioneer's headquarters, and he had taken out thirty-seven men and eighteen women, and set to work to cultivate the ground, make roads and erect dwellings. But we need not stop to inquire as to which party was responsible for the failure of the plan: it is sufficient to emphasize that it never succeeded either as a settlement or as a fishery.

A certain amount of cruising was done, and sperm whales were sighted; but only a few were ever taken by the ships. Enderby complained that in this respect the loss was owing to the company's mismanagement on two counts. Firstly, the whalers had been built in

such a way that they could carry not more than 115 tuns of oil, whereas they ought to have been able to contain 185 tuns. Secondly, the company had paid £8,200 each for ships which could have been built and equipped in America for £5,000 each. But thirdly, the whole success of the whaling enterprise depended on the personnel. By 1847 there were practically no men in England expert in hunting the "common" whale, since this occupation had been long abandoned.

But in North America plenty of these men would have been available, and have made all the difference between success and failure; for a bad "headsman" in a boat would always spoil the morale of fresh, green hands, and in the end ruin all prospects of the voyage. The directors of the company, Enderby complained, had sent out only four of these experts, who were not enough for the boats of one vessel, let alone eight. The chief ability of a whaling master—his supreme recommendation—should be his capacity for killing whales. This duty demanded both courage and activity, and such endowments were to be found usually only in men of the age of twenty to twenty-eight. These men could always obtain high wages, and a good young captain with a reputation had never any difficulty in picking the best officers and crew: consequently, where every whaling voyage was a separate adventure, it paid to obtain only the finest whaling masters. And it was just because these did not at that time exist in Britain that the Company should have gone to America for them,where they could have been found in abundance without the slightest difficulty. There was another matter that caused trouble in this Auckland settlement. Drink, that curse of so many otherwise happy ships, became one of the problems with which Enderby had to wrestle until he was compelled to

destroy all spirits except those kept for medicinal purposes. American whalers, with a few exceptions, were run on temperance principles.

Thus this Auckland whaling venture turned out hopelessly, and its failure was due chiefly to the plain fact of the British lack of expert leaders in this highly specialized work. There was this in common between the northern and the southern whaling: the amount of physical risk though different in kind was similar in degree. The true whales in the north were not usually combative, but there was always the great risk of ice and heavy weather. The sperm whaling in the southern seas was bereft of ice danger until right down in the approach to the Antarctic: but the cachalot is a bolder, more mischievous, fighting animal, threatening that destruction to boats and ships which we have already noticed. In the attempts to make whaling flourish, British effort in the warmer seas, such as the Pacific for example, has never rivalled all those generations of effort which were made in the Arctic areas. But to-day whatever future whaling may seem to possess rests on that Antarctic part of the world which we shall discuss in due place.

It is characteristic of some sperm whales that they prefer to use their dangerous jaws, when attacked, rather than employ their tail. The mammal turns on his back, keeping its jaw suspended ominously over the boat. Sometimes this used to put such fear into a boat's crew that they would all take a leap into the water and remain there till the danger passed. In 1836 an American whaler in the South Seas had one of her boats in this manner nipped right in two, but fortunately none of the crew on this occasion was injured. Incidentally it may be mentioned that during the early part of the nineteenth century there had come a change in the building of the carvel

whaling boats, the wood being sawn out of straight-grained oak, and then bent by steam or boiling water. being thus rendered more elastic than when sawn. At the same time they were stronger and lighter, This practice had been for a long time employed for the clinker-built boats, but not for the carvel, and its introduction was made by Thomas Brodrick, a Whitby shipbuilder.

The whalers in the Greenland Sea or Baffin's Bay well realized that their greatest enemy was not the whale but the ice. In the warm southern seas every boat-launching might lead to a fatal risk. Thus, for example, in the year 1835 the whaler *Pusie Hall's* boats, four in number, were out after a whale which chased them back to the ship, killed one of the boat's hands, bit one of the officers, and for quite a time resisted all the lances hurled at it from the bows of the ship. One particularly notorious fighting whale was an individual who used to cruise off the New Zealand coast, and was easily recognized by his white hump. He was well known to the crews and went by the name of "New Zealand Tom." Another celebrated fighter used to inhabit the Straits of Timor, and he was at last killed only after he had nipped off with his jaws a boat's bows.

During the year 1836 the South Sea whaler *Arabella* was cruising off the Society Islands when the whale, after being harpooned, turned suddenly round, hit the boat with his head, broke it in two and then swam through it. In such circumstances as these the experience, the coolness and skill of the man in charge of the boat meant all that Enderby insisted. One nipped boat, one incident of raw hands being left to swim about looking up at those threatening jaws, was quite enough to make the crew nervous for the rest of the ship's voyage. But a good man with knowledge and courage, vigorous and determined,

could make light of these incidents and inspire his men to further efforts.

In the throwing of the harpoon lay the great skill, but if through nervousness or lack of experience the line became entangled, the boat might be drawn below the water almost instantaneously: and there are instances on record where boats mysteriously and rapidly disappeared from what was surmised to be this cause. A smart man of course was on the look-out for such an occurrence, and some officers always used to have an axe ready in the hand while the line was running out: for a quick, sharp blow and the immediate severance of the line were the only things which could save lives and boat.

Yes: a novice in charge was too dangerous. Perhaps the ideal was a man of about twenty-six years of age, who had been brought up in whalers since he was a lad. He had been out in boats under experts, he had learned all the tricks which an angry whale could play, and he was young enough to enjoy fighting yet old enough to know how. We all understand how dangerous in a small sailing craft is a raw landsman, who has not yet learned the importance of ropes running clear through blocks and fairleads: most accidents come through that neglect. It was the same with the harpoon line. The third mate of the whaler *Melantho* lost his life through the harpoon line suddenly getting out of the fairlead and carrying him right out of the boat; and notwithstanding that the line was forthwith cut, allowing the whale to escape, before the mate could be picked up he had been grabbed by a shark and had disappeared.

Or, again, take the case of the whaler *Seringapatam* in the Straits of Timor. A whale had been fastened, but the creature came so close that one of his flukes actually grazed on the chest the boy who was pulling the after oar. Owing to the collision against the

whale some coils of harpoon line were thrown over the shoulders also of the man at the tub-oar, and whilst the whale hurried on, the unfortunate fellow was pulled overboard. His body was at length rescued, but found to be lifeless, entangled in the line. His shipmates could do nothing for him.

Accidents such as these were the risks which might happen to any boat, on any occasion: and they tended to ruin the enterprise for the whole three years that remained. This, in turn, meant a loss of dividends, and a reluctance on the part of the owners to finance any more whaling cruises. Thus, the prizes went to the survivals of the fittest and most experienced young men who had been able to avoid such dispiriting disasters.

CHAPTER XV

WAR AND THE WHALERS

IF we had come across a northern whaler in the early Victorian days, we should have found she was a full-rigged ship of not more than 450 tons; and if we had come across her at sea with her main-topsails backed and her courses clewed up and a number of birds swooping around her, we should know even from a distance that she was just cutting up the whale which had been recently caught. And as you came nearer you would have heard the men at the capstan heaving away to an old whaling chantey:

> 'Tis well nigh sixty years ago,
> On March the twentieth day,
> When we set sail from Yarmouth Roads,
> And bore due North away.

And, after a few narrative verses concerning the whaling operations, there would come the final cheery words:

> Singing "Aye, lads, give way, lads,"
> We're bound to the north countree,
> Where icebergs grow and whales do blow,
> And sunsets you never see.

Dreadful doggerel it all seems to the modern sailor, with his extra master's ticket and scientific knowledge: but those were the days of simple ships and plain seamen. So you would hear the song end abruptly as that long strip of blubber was hauled up from the whale's carcase alongside. The "blanket-

piece" they used to call it. And then you would be able to watch those busy men on the whale's back working away with their spades and cutting another piece. That was before the days of steam affected these vessels. But even those Arctic whalers of about 1870 were still fully rigged, their engines were of very small horse-power, and just useful for getting the ship out of some awkward surrounding ice. Otherwise they were sailing ships and practically did all their passages under canvas. They went out with coal in their oil tanks, which were cleaned out on reaching the grounds and then filled with the whale produce. But their fuel consumption was very small.

As one examines the lines of such a vessel, one notices that this three-master has not a straight stem, but a moderately rounded forefoot with a straight keel and a very short counter. Her sides were about as solid as one of Nelson's wooden walls, and her bows were protected with sheets of iron to resist the ice. The total complement was about fifty, the men being berthed forward and the officers aft. The single funnel was immediately abaft the mainmast, and as you walked along the raised poop deck you would have noted the engine-room skylight, sometimes a light flying bridge, then the companion-way to the saloon and the officers' cabins leading out of it. The steering wheel was right aft, there was a pump wheel just behind the mainmast; while forward there were the capstan and fo'c'sle hatch, and then came the big hold for the whale produce. In lieu of a figure-head you would notice that she carried a carved harpoon.

The Norwegian whalers of this period were small and built of their native fir with a few sheets of iron sheathing, hoping to avoid being seriously caught in the ice. The Norwegian steam-whalers were both ancient and slow; but there were also some ketch-

rigged craft of about 40 tons with a crew which varied from nine to seventeen. This smaller type sometimes used her squaresail for driving the ship astern, if she got caught in the ice and saw an opening clear astern.

But during the American Civil War there came an additional peril to those whalers which used to sail from the western coast through the Bering Straits into the Arctic. And the destruction of whaling ships by those Confederate cruisers *Shenandoah*, *Alabama* and *Florida* was one of the biggest shocks that ever came to the industry. "The whaling industry of New England," says Mr. Arthur C. Watson, "saw the handwriting on the wall during the Civil War. Petroleum had been discovered, and the ship merchants and captains knew what the consequences were to be. They realized that the decline in their business was permanent, and that, as the years came on, more and more of their craft would be forced out of the running. It was merely a coincidence that the war and the mineral oil discovery should be contemporary events, but the war had a part of its own to play in the decay of the industry—a dramatic part, in fact, which made the port of New Bedford shudder for its future far more than did the news about petroleum."

When the *Shenandoah* in June 1865 came up the Bering Straits she was rewarded for her trouble by capturing and burning five whaling vessels. But on the next day she captured at anchor quite a fleet of whalers, with the exception of the *Favorite*, commanded by Captain Young, who resisted the Confederate's officer coming on board not merely with words, but with a display of guns and fire-arms. But the *Favorite's* crew got frightened and deserted, so that after removing the ship's ammunition they took to the boats and left Captain Young by himself. The

latter, when the *Shenandoah's* next boat came off, had no alternative but to surrender when he found there was nothing for his guns to fire, and on being taken prisoner he was put in irons. On that day nine whaling ships were lost to their enemy.

But during that same month the *Shenandoah* made numerous other attacks on whaling fleets, burned thirty-four fine ships, and employed four others for taking the captured whaling crews back to the shore. These losses to this section of seafaring were such that ship-owners were pretty well ruined. Nor were these by any means all. Everyone knows the daring story of the *Alabama*, how she was built by Messrs. Laird of Birkenhead as a wooden barquentine-rigged screw steamer of 1,040 tons under her yard designation as "No. 290," and that on July 29, 1862, under the pretence of doing her trial trip she slipped down the Mersey out to sea and made for the Azores, where she was met by two other vessels which brought her armament. But many readers will have forgotten the blows she struck at the American whaling ships.

Her commanding officer was Captain Raphael Semmes, and she at once began to show what she could do. "I resolved to strike a blow at the enemy's whale-fishery, off the Azores," he wrote. "There is a curious and beautiful problem—that of Providence feeding the whale—connected with this fishery. . . . It is because of that problem that the Azores are a whaling station. The food which attracts the whale to these islands is not produced in their vicinity, but is carried thither by the currents—the currents of the ocean performing the same functions for the finny tribe that the atmosphere does for the plants. The fishes of the sea, in their kingdom beneath the waters, have thus their highways and byways, as well as the animals upon the land, and are always to be found

congregated where their great food-bearers, the currents, make the deposits."

The American whalers had been fond of this ground and found it profitable, the season usually ending about the beginning of October, when the first gales began to blow and the whales migrated to other feeding grounds. But here was the *Alabama* off here by the beginning of September, so she had several weeks in which she could hope for success. It was that old area, of course, where English ships in the sixteenth century used to lie in wait for the richly laden carracks making for Spain and Portugal. And so on the night of September 4 we find the *Alabama* hove-to off Fayal under her topsails, and the next day the light easterly weather with a cloudy sky came as ideal conditions for the cruiser to begin.

She had not long to wait, for a ship was sighted lying to, and then the cruiser made sail, hoisted United States colours and ran down to within a few hundred yards of her. The strange ship also hoisted United States colours and revealed herself a whaler. She had that very day harpooned a whale, and a big one at that. She had just got the animal alongside and the yard tackles in the usual way were hoisting him partially out of the water to be flensed, when the *Alabama* sprang a ripe surprise by now hoisting true Confederate colours.

The name of the whaler was the *Ocmulgee*, of Edgartown, Massachusetts, whose master Semmes described as "a genuine specimen of the Yankee whaling skipper; long and lean, and as elastic, apparently, as the whalebone he dealt in. Nothing could exceed the blank stare of astonishment that sat on his face, as the change of flags took place on board the *Alabama*. He had been engaged, up to the last moment, with his men, securing the rich spoil alongside. The whale was a fine 'sperm,' and was a 'big strike,' and had

already been denuded of much of its blubber when we got alongside. He naturally concluded, he said, when he saw the United States colours at our peak, that we were one of the new gunboats sent out by Mr. Welles to protect the whale fishery. It was indeed remarkable that no protection should have been given to these men by their Government. Unlike the ships of commerce, the whalers are obliged to congregate within small well-known spaces of ocean, and remain there for weeks at a time, whilst the whaling season lasts. It was the most obvious thing in the world that these vessels, thus clustered together, should attract the attention of the Confederate cruisers and be struck at."

For at that time there were not more than half a dozen important whaling stations in the world, and as already mentioned, the *Shenandoah* was able in the North Pacific to repeat the successes of the *Alabama* in the Atlantic. During the Great War it became necessary latterly to send armed craft to protect the British fishing fleets in the North Sea, but, as Semmes says, "the whalers, like the commerce of the United States generally, were abandoned to their fate." It thus became perfectly easy to strike a blow at American whaling with such force that it never recovered. It has been estimated that these cruisers did damage to the extent of £310,000, including £100,000 worth of oil lost. In addition to that sum must be reckoned the loss of twenty-three fine New Bedford whaling ships which were intentionally sunk at the entrances to Confederate harbours in order to block them up. Thus the unfortunate owners and fishermen seemed to have been dealt blows right and left. Who could expect that with such circumstances whaling could ever become again what it once was?

But to return to the *Alabama*: there were taken out of the *Ocmulgee* not merely the thirty-seven un-

happy people but meat and stores, by which time night had come on. It was too late to think of burning her, for the flames against the nocturnal sky would only scare the other whalers somewhere in the vicinity. "I had now become too old a hunter to commit such an indiscretion," remarked Semmes humorously. "With a little management and caution, I might hope to uncover the birds no faster than I could bag them. And so, hoisting a light at the peak of the prize, I permitted her to remain anchored to the whale, and we lay by her until the next morning, when we burned her; the smoke of the conflagration being, no doubt, mistaken by vessels at a distance for that of some passing steamer."

Later on, after capturing a Boston schooner, the *Alabama* chased a whaling brig, which by her number of boats and other characteristics showed her occupation unmistakably. But she was eventually allowed to go, for she proved herself a genuine Portuguese; and this was the only foreign whaler that the *Alabama* came across, for the whaling monopoly was so thoroughly in American hands by this date. But in that same afternoon Semmes gave chase to a vessel in the north-west and came up to her about sunset. She was flying American colours and her master unsuspectingly presumed the steamer had been sent to act as escort. The American vessel was found to be the New Bedford whaler *Ocean Rover*, and already she had been cruising about the world, true to her name, for three years and four months, and had sent home one or two cargoes of oil, but was now going back there with eleven hundred barrels after her long voyaging, having determined to visit the Azores grounds in order to fill up what empty casks remained. But the *Ocean Rover* was now to end her last voyage of all. Semmes had her hove-to until morning about four miles from the land, and

the whaler's captain asked permission to land in his own boats. Semmes suggested that this was rather a long distance to pull, to which the Yankee skipper replied, "Oh! That's nothing. We whalers sometimes chase a whale, on the broad sea, until our ships are hull-down, and think nothing of it."

So, the sea being smooth, the six whaleboats were allowed alongside the *Ocean Rover*, and for two hours the men worked hard transferring provisions, personal effects and whaling gear as well as the ship's cat and parrot. The whaler's skipper declined Semmes's suggestion that the boats were too heavily laden to be safe. "No," insisted the whaler, "they're as buoyant as ducks, and we shan't ship a drop of water." And he was right, for they got to the Flores shore all right.

By morning the *Alabama* had captured the *Alert* of New London, whose stores were extremely welcome as she was only sixteen days out of her home port. And now after burning the schooner *Starlight*, the *Ocean Rover* and *Alert*, the *Alabama* drew close to a large schooner which had to have a blank cartridge fired before she would heave-to. She was boarded and found to be the whaler *Weathergauge* of Provincetown, Massachusetts, six weeks out. Semmes said that American sailing ships were notable for the whiteness of their canvas, which was made out of American cotton, so the cut of the sails and the taper of the spars usually showed the nationality: but on one occasion the *Alabama* had a good chase all for nothing, the vessel being a Dane although she seemed a real Yankee.

After the *Weathergauge* whaler had landed her crew in the ship's boats, she was burned, and presently steering off to the north-west the *Alabama* tried fresh ground, and sighted the New Bedford whaler *Altamaha*, five months out. She had not had

much whaling luck and was comparatively "clean." She was now burned, but owing to absence of oil did not burn so furiously. It was now the middle of September, and on the night after the capture of *Altamaha* there was an exciting chase. About half-past eleven a large sailing ship passed to windward, and visible in the bright moonlight. Both ships were close-hauled on the starboard tack, the strange vessel being about three points on the *Alabama's* weather bow, and evidently realized that the *Alabama* was now pursuing, for the stranger set both her royals and flying jib. This suited the Confederate perfectly, as her best sailing was when she was on a wind, and few ships could beat her under that condition. The stranger had got a good start, but the *Alabama* was footing so quickly that within a couple of hours she was on the other's weather quarter, having both fore-reached and got to windward of the stranger. When the range came down to a mile, Semmes had a blank fired to cause the fleer to heave-to. But the latter now bore away a little, eased her sheets and began getting out her stuns'l booms preparatory to setting more canvas.

The *Alabama* therefore eased sheets also, and was so well handled that before the pursued could get her foretopmast stuns'l set, she was at point-blank range. Semmes fired a second blank and then the stranger hauled up her courses and steered up into the wind. Was she a neutral or a prize, after all? Semmes sent his boarding officer to her with instructions that if she were the latter he was to hoist a light as soon as he got aboard her. Followed a brief lull as the oars quickly rowed the boat away from the cruiser. But now up went a light to the stranger's peak, and so the two vessels remained near to each other till morning. She was found to be yet another whaler, the *Benjamin Tucker*, eight months out of

New Bedford, with 340 barrels of oil. After her crew had been taken off and some of her stores salved, such as tobacco, she was set on fire.

And so matters went on, for the next vessel to be caught was the whaling schooner *Courser* of Provincetown, Massachusetts, with a young man as skipper. The difficulty now was exactly that which confronted the German raiders during the Great War: in fact, Semmes' tactics are so similar to those of such ships as the *Moewe* and *Seeadler* that one can only suppose that German naval officers must have paid considerable study to the Confederate *Alabama's* operations. When the auxiliary sailing ship *Seeadler* in the South Atlantic had sunk so many vessels away from land she found all those survivors a nuisance: for they had to be fed and they took up a great deal of space. Von Luckner, her commanding officer, got over this difficulty by capturing one more ship and sending the other crews away in her with strict orders to make for the nearest South American port. Semmes now ran back towards the Azores, anxious to get rid of all this crowd, which was seriously inconveniencing the ship, for he had the crews of three vessels. Towing eight whaleboats he approached Flores and sent seventy shipless seamen in the oared craft to the land, and as they pulled away from the cruiser it seemed as if a regatta were being held in the Atlantic. After they had gone, and just before the *Courser* was set on fire, Semmes used her as a target, and gave his men practice in gunnery.

Resuming now her north-west course, which had been interrupted, the *Alabama* with a fine south-west wind sighted, chased and overcame a large ship which turned out to be the whaler *Virginia*, twenty days out from New Bedford. After three and a half hours the contest was over. Semmes says the master of the ship was greatly surprised at the *Alabama's*

speed. Fortunately there still exists in America the statement of Captain Shadrach R. Tilton, then in command of this whaling ship, and Mr. Arthur C. Watson, who has had access to it, says that Tilton told of Semmes with his heavy black moustache waxed by a servant every morning and of how the Confederate's captain always wore white kid gloves. These little touches of personal pride exactly agree with Semmes's somewhat bombastic tone of writing, very much after the manner of certain German naval officers who published their experiences of the Great War.

Tilton stated that "the pirate ship overtook us in latitude 39° 10′; longitude 34° 20′. She first showed British colors, but when a quarter of a mile from the *Virginia* she set Confederate colors and sent an armed boat's crew aboard. I was informed the vessel was a prize to the *Alabama*, and ordered to take my papers and go aboard the steamer. The pirates then stripped the ship of all valuable articles, and at 4 p.m. set fire to her. I went on the quarterdeck of the *Alabama* with my son, when they sent us into the lee waist with the crew. All were ironed except two boys, the cook, and the steward. I asked if I was to be ironed, and the reply was that the vessel's purser had been in irons aboard the United States vessel, and his head shaved. He proposed to retaliate. We were put in the lee waist with an old mattress and a few blankets upon which to lie. The steamer's guns were run out, the side and the ports could not be shut. So when the sea was rough and the vessel rolled, the water washed the decks and we were wet all the time. Often we would wake at night with a sea pouring over us. Our food consisted of beef, pork, rice, ham, tea, coffee, and bread. Only one of our irons was taken off at a time. We were always under guard. On October 3rd we fell in with the

schooner *Emily Farnham*, to which we were transferred, after signing a parole."

Semmes as a matter of fact had the torch applied to *Virginia* rather late in the afternoon, so the wreck was still visible whilst she burned after nightfall. But a still more exciting chase was to take place the next day when it was blowing hard. The look-out man at *Alabama's* masthead reported a barque in sight. The latter saw that the cruiser wore round and thereupon made off at once under all sail. Running down before the wind, *Alabama* held on to t'gallant sails although the masts whipped as if they would go over the side; and it was the same with the other ship. There was a nasty sea running, but the cruiser leaped along so quickly that within three hours the barque was within range. The cruiser was employing that ancient and perfectly legal ruse of flying false colours, but Semmes does not explain whether he lowered these English colours down before opening fire, as he unquestionably should.

After *Alabama* fired, the barque hoisted her flag and clewed up her t'gallant sails, hauled up her courses and waited. The former took in his t'gallants, furled his courses and reefed his topsails. It was blowing so hard now and the sea was so bad that Semmes even hesitated to lower his boats: but it was evident that presently the wind would be of gale force, and unless the barque were captured at once she would be able to escape in the darkness and tempest of the night. Therefore he ordered two of his best boats to be lowered, whilst the cruiser lay hove-to but to windward of the prize, so that the boats could row down to leeward. The *Alabama* would then run down to leeward so that the boats could again have a favourable chance. This, of course, is the recognised manœuvre approved by every expert in seamanship, and it was accomplished

successfully. The boats with their human loads of prisoners went rushing down the sea valleys and over the crests, came under the lee of *Alabama*, who threw them a rope, and so the captors and captives got aboard. The ship had been set on fire before shoving off and was found to be the whaler *Elisha Dunbar*, twenty-four days out from New Bedford.

But the wind and sea prevented Semmes from sailing this crew back to the Azores, where quite a Yankee population was now being congregated. Under close-reefed topsails the *Alabama* remained for several days, and the wind coming north she drifted some distance south. It may be mentioned here that Captain Gifford of the *Elisha Dunbar* afterwards stated quite definitely that the *Alabama* had "fired a gun under our stern, with the St. George's cross flying at the time. Our colours were set, when she displayed the Confederate flag . . . there were sixty-five barrels of sperm oil on deck."

The break-up of the weather had put an end to the whaling season rather sooner than would ordinarily have been the case, so Semmes resolved to change his cruising ground and make towards the Newfoundland Banks. After capturing other merchant ships he came up with the New Bedford whaler *Levi Starbuck*, bound on a thirty months' voyage to the Pacific, and she, too, was captured and then burnt. In like manner, too, the Confederate cruiser *Florida* in 1864 was operating in the Atlantic, and among others she sank the New Bedford whaler *Golconda*. For the latter it was particularly hard lines as she had been away from home for most of five years, she was just ending her cruise, and had even thrown overboard the previous day her "try-works" used for boiling the last whale down, and there was no intention now but to sail home as quickly as possible with the oil cargo. It was just as the whaler was passing through

the Gulf Stream that she was caught by the Confederate, whose officer came aboard, took a few barrels of sperm oil, set her on fire in the cabin, at the main hatchway and forecastle, and left her to burn. The unfortunate crew were subsequently put aboard a schooner.

Thus in this Civil War those American whalers which had built up such an interesting section of history, and brought so much wealth into North America, received a terrible setback. We may well sympathize with owners and skippers and crew, for it was the breaking of a fine tradition which will ever be remembered. But all over the world whaling was, with the advent of steam and the diminishing of the sperm whale, now to undergo a change from those days when long voyages of several years were the rule, and the ship was the floating peregrinating factory and open boats were the whale-catchers. Those ancient methods have gone never to return.

CHAPTER XVI

THE THIRTY-TWO SHIPS

THAT great disaster in the Arctic during the year 1830, when nineteen British whaling ships and one French were lost, and over a thousand men temporarily lived on the ice, was destined to be repeated but on an even greater scale by the calamity which overtook the American whaling fleet in the year 1871. In the former case the scene was Baffin's Bay: in the latter it was further to the westward. I believe that never in the history of the industry has a loss so wholesale and so financially deplorable taken place. Whaling-ship owners could scarcely have received a more terrible shock than the news which eventually reached them. It is the old story of that enemy ice making sport of wooden ships. The one satisfactory aspect—and that an amazing one—is that not a single life was lost. But instead of nineteen vessels being wrecked, we have to chronicle thirty-two.[1]

The Bering Strait, separating Asia from America, is of course the most northerly part of the Pacific, narrow, shallow and bordered by bare, rocky shores, and from November to May generally impassable owing to the fog and ice: but otherwise it gives access to the Arctic in the remaining months. The right of Canadian fishermen to hunt seals in this

[1] For information in this chapter I have to acknowledge Mr. Arthur C. Watson's interesting article in *Yachting* for May 1925. Mr. Watson has had available the journals and log books of American whaling ship masters.

strait used to be the cause of much irritation for many years between the Governments of the United States, Canada and Great Britain, until the award by the arbitrators was made in 1893. Through this sea in the summer of 1871 thirty-nine whaling ships and barques were able to sail into the Arctic Ocean, their intended destination being Cape Barrow, at the extreme northern end of Alaska, where it was known that the whales were plentiful. Thus we have to observe that the mammal in the course of his migration had gone still further west. Theoretically there seemed every chance of a fine catch for the fleet.

Luckily, too, movements of the Bering Strait ice packs gave a comparatively easy passage to these ships, whose captains in their combined knowledge and judgment of this part of the world were unequalled. The late spring had been passed whaling in this strait, and so soon as the ice permitted, the fleet was able to work north, past Cape Lisburne in June and then to anchor at the other side of that great bight by Icy Cape, which will be found marked in the modern maps less than a hundred and fifty miles short of Cape Barrow.

Early in August some of the fleet were able, by the receding of the ice, to get further ahead and either anchor or secure to the ice. Then after another wait, the ships were able to sail in a six-mile-wide channel between the shore and the ice until once more they reached the barrier, and made fast as before. The idea was to keep going as soon as the lane was clear, so as to reach Cape Barrow at the earliest date: but it was the ice which determined the rate of progress and the annoying stoppages. However, in the period of waiting, boats were launched and whales struck, and the oil extracted. There was no idleness that could have been overcome. Towing the whales back to the ship secured

to the ice, cutting them sometimes till midnight, the days were full of activity. And then by August 11th the ice surrounded some of the ships so that many of the boats were unable to work, and others had to be hauled over the frozen surface in order to regain their vessels. Efforts were made by setting all sail to get ships clear of this frozen obstruction, yet it was no good.

But then on August 14th, when the ice loosened, ships did succeed in reaching clear water and coming to anchor in a narrow belt between ice and shore, yet extending no further north than Cape Belcher, which effectually stopped further progress. It was hoped that this delay was only temporary, and in the meanwhile the boats were out chasing the whales keenly. If only a north-easter would come, this accumulation of pack ice, with its power of danger, would soon be driven away: the fleet would be able to work to its destination. Here in this confined lane were thirty fine ships, with about a hundred and fifty boats working till nine at night: a wonderful sight of seafarers.

But now that treacherous ice, instead of clearing, came driving down so near to the fleet that the ships were compelled to go close in to the beach. Some ships had to shift in a hurry, slipping their cables. The lane had been reduced to half a mile now: only at the southern end was it clear of ice. And yet it was a fine picture to see that long line of vessels riding there and their crews still at it dragging their boats across the ice, working arduously, bringing back the blubber by the same rough route. The continuance of the ice setting in from the west, however, was giving cause for anxiety. Boats not engaged in whaling were sent along the coast reconnoitring, and then on August 25th strong north-east winds began.

Any but intrepid mariners would have taken advantage of this new condition and gone south, for now a lane was opened several miles wide, and the ships could have still escaped the fate that was coming to them. The local Esquimaux prophesied that this clearing would not last long, that the ice would soon close around once more; and strongly advised the whaling captains to go back whilst the opportunity lasted. But these masters of craft were too plucky to be scared, too intent on the numerous whales now being struck to heed this precaution. They had come in order to fill their holds with the precious cargo, and if they went home now they would not have completed their job. However, that delay, that enthusiasm, were fatal. On August 29th the proof of the Esquimaux's sagacity began to manifest itself, for the wind came round to west-nor'-west and blew freshly.

Picture this long line of vessels anchored to the south-west of Cape Belcher, still busy boiling out the oil from their whales whilst that merciless ice like the approach of doom began crowding in always from the west. Watch some of the ships hang on till it was necessary to get under way and secure under the lee of a large floe. But on the following day the wind had backed to south-east, it was blowing hard and snowing. Thirty vessels in sight with their spars all frosted, every ship hemmed in between land and ice, yet most of them still boiling away at their oil as if the danger were not worth considering. But on the second day of September the disaster began its toll by numbers. First the *Roman* was crushed by the ice and abandoned, and then the brig *Comet*.

Strong westerly winds were blowing and a thick snow-storm was making matters no more pleasant, but unless that north-easter returned there was no

prospect of the other ships being saved: already they were uncomfortably close to the shore. But still the boats went out in the narrow lane that existed, and still the whaling operations went on. It became necessary now to kedge the ships clear of the ice and anchor in only three fathoms of water, on a lee shore, with every prospect of being driven on to the beach. In a short time one vessel was seen with her masts cut away, forced into the shallows by the oncoming ice, and a complete wreck.

What was to be done? Universal loss was merely a matter now of time. All the captains realized that the only chance lay in getting news of the situation through to the south where those of the fleet, seven in number, which had not advanced so far north remained in clear water. How was this to be done? On September 9th at four in the morning several boats from imprisoned ships were sent in order to sound and find a channel so as to get the brig *Kohola* out and reach those seven southern ships. If the latter had left, what would be the fate of the rest? But, unfortunately, the water was found too shallow. It now looked as if the entire northern fleet would have to remain hemmed in for the winter, for the new ice was making. On August 11th preparations were undertaken to leave the ships, and some boats with provisions were sent to deposit them at Icy Cape to the southward, the distance between this headland and Cape Belcher being a matter of about fifty-odd miles. If the ships had to be abandoned, these supplies would be essential.

So it came to pass that on the following day the captains of this northern fleet held a council and came to the conclusion that abandonment was inevitable. There were only two alternatives: that irresistible ice would presently either crush every ship or drive them ashore. But to remain in the Arctic

with provisions inadequate to last till next spring was a gloomy thought, and the chance of that north-easter returning was now one in a million. Anyone who has had to abandon his ship knows that terrible pang, which is indescribable in its bitterness. I can think of nothing more sad and sorrowful than a fine hardy set of captains being driven to the decision of deserting their stout ships by the inevitable cruelty of circumstance. It was man versus nature, with the former's weakness exemplified in its nakedness. To leave a shattered wreck is one thing: but in cold blood, after mature consideration, to do so whilst the ship is still intact is the greatest grief which can ever be the lot of a shipmaster.

Orders were given for every vessel to fly the ensign union down, and for the crews to make ready and leave. On September 13th the whole fleet had its boats in the water with provisions trying to find a clear lane: nor was it known that the southern ships were in any clear sea. To get the fleet out had been found impossible owing to banks carrying but five feet of water. So far only two ships had met their fate, but by the 14th the ice was surrounding the remaining thirty with closer grip, so that there was no room now for the vessels to swing clear, and the rudders hit the ice. Moreover the barometer was falling very surely. Now in these thirty whalers were officers, crew and the wives as well as children of the captains. They were more than ships: they were the only homes of many, and some of these people had been born and brought up in these craft. Thus to have to leave the vessels was something deeply personal and sentimental.

The sorrowful exodus began on this fourteenth day of the month, the wind being now south-west and the boats, steering along the land towards Icy Cape, managed to get through southwards so that

by the afternoon of the 15th they began to approach the *Daniel Webster*, the *Progress* and the other five of the seven ships which luckily were still clear of the ice. Here in these vessels the entire number of survivors was received on board. Mothers and girls and boys; captains and mates and hardy seamen with bedding and stores loading the boats to the gunwales had come over those perishing waters, which fortunately had remained calm. A halt had been made at night, after starting on the morning of the 14th, and having rowed and sailed till darkness overcame them, this population of twelve hundred people in that numerous flotilla landed for the night at Icy Cape. Here a tent was erected for the women and children: the men warmed themselves around great fires.

On the 15th there were still several miles before reaching the seven ships; it was no longer a lane sheltered by ice, but the unrestricted Arctic Ocean; it came on to blow, and although several reefs were tucked in the sail, every boat was so low down in the water that it was a toss-up as to whether even now the little craft with their cargoes would win through. And having arrived near the ships which were lying at anchor, even these heavy vessels were pitching so monstrously in the nasty sea that it was a ticklish business getting alongside and hoisting up the passengers out of the lively boats. The *Daniel Webster* and the *Progress* were still anchored, but others were under way. Still, every man, woman and child was got aboard safely, and the boats were then cast adrift and smashed themselves to pieces against the ice-pack to leeward.

Thirty-two ships lost, and everyone saved! How was it done? The answer is, pluck and good seamanship. Those whaling men possessed both, and one of the surest tests of the latter is the bringing

a boat alongside a big vessel in a jumpy seaway. There they came, some under oars, some under dipping lug, others rigged with jib and spritsail; in each case with the steersman controlling her standing with his oar at the stern as if going after a whale. Yes, the organization and handling of that open-boat flotilla is something to be remembered.

CHAPTER XVII

FINDING THE NEW WHALING GROUNDS

AS in the Arctic, so in the Antarctic and approaches, the story of whaling is intimately connected with that of discovery. But we must apply ourselves now to one special section of southern whaling which is officially known as the Falkland Islands and Dependencies. These comprise, besides the Falklands themselves, the following five areas: South Georgia; the South Shetland Islands; Graham Land with adjacent islands; the South Orkney Islands; and the South Sandwich Islands.

And in focusing our attention here we are studying the region where the whaling industry of today has settled down and seems likely to continue for the future. It is a part of the ocean which still remains to be surveyed efficiently, whose geographical nomenclature reads like one long catalogue of bygone explorers and their ships. From the Weddell Sea northwards to South Georgia we are in latitudes which have been rendered historical by a long line of gallant, enduring adventurers after whales or scientific knowledge. Weddell Sea, James Ross Island, Port Charcot, Nordenskjold Land, Mikkelsen Harbour, Whaler's Bay, Frenchman Hill, Biscoe Islands, Erebus and Terror Bay, Dundee Island, Parry Strait, Admiralty Bay, Belgica Strait—you can trace the nationalities and minds of the plucky pioneers who have been there from time to time.

By most people the island of South Georgia was totally unheard of until Sir Ernest Shackleton brought it into prominence, firstly by that marvellous eight-hundred-mile voyage in a 20-ft. whaling boat from Elephant Island, after the loss of *Endurance*—an achievement which I always regard as one of the finest small-craft passages in the history of the world; and secondly, by his return to South Georgia, after the war, to be buried there. But as we glance at the nomenclature along the South Georgia coastline, with its Queen Maud's Bay, Coaling Harbour, Right Whale Bay, Markham Point, Prince Olaf Harbour, Leith Harbour, Stromness Harbour, Larsen Point, Nansen Rocks, St. Andrew's Bay, King Edward Cove, Moraine Fjord—we need no telling that British and Scandinavian sailors have been there already.

Some of these European names will leap into further prominence presently as we go through our narrative, but let us see how it comes that the whole present and future of the whaling industry should concentrate on to this neighbourhood. How did it happen like this, and from when? Well, after the introduction of steam into whalers that industry carried on amid the Arctic mists and gales continued to decline until it remained in a long-protracted passing-away condition. But, thanks to the Antarctic explorers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there was such evidential information about whales that a fresh spirit of optimism broke forth and, notwithstanding some serious disappointments, justified itself. Thus, we are beginning to derive commercial benefits from those daring voyages of the past. Now what were these expeditions?

We may content ourselves with some of the principal ones. We know definitely that Captain Cook took possession of South Georgia, which he

named, in 1775, and afterwards discovered the Sandwich group. It was Cook who was the first to report the presence of whales off South Georgia. Captain James Colnet in 1793–4 confirmed this report, especially in regard to black whales. In fact, during the next 125 years whales were certainly seen in nearly 300 places south of latitude 50°, so that Cook's information was more than reliable. But the South Shetlands, that group of islands stretching right away south of latitude 60° towards the Antarctic Circle, were not named or discovered till just over a century ago, when Captain William Smith landed from the *Williams* of Blyth in 1819 on King George Island and took possession on behalf of Britain. Here, about 400 miles south-east of Cape Horn, the ground is for ever frozen and barren, but at one spot—Deception Island—there is a landlocked harbour and a whaling station; for off these islands the modern steam whalers carry on their work with great activity. Smith had reported the presence of whales.

Graham Land, that mountainous area of thick snow and ice, with few landings but one good harbour, was discovered and taken possession of by H.M.S. *Andromache* in January 1820. The Russian captain von Bellinghausen charted the south side of South Georgia in 1819 and came across British whalers there. The South Orkneys, which lie about a couple of hundred miles east of the South Shetlands, were discovered by Captain George Powell of the *Dove* and charted in 1821–2, and a certain amount of whaling has taken place off here. The inhospitable, volcanic, icebound South Sandwich Islands discovered by Cook in 1775 are not used by whalers.

These, then, are the five British dependencies of the Falklands. Powell, Weddell and others charted

the South Shetlands, Weddell also charted the South Orkneys; and Captain John Biscoe, one of Enderby's whaling captains, in 1832 discovered and sketched the west side of Graham Land. But this first knowledge was added to by British sealers, by d'Urville, in 1838, by Wilkes of the United States Navy, and then came that fine expedition of *Erebus* and *Terror* under Captain James Clark Ross, R.N., in the early 'forties, who specially referred to the presence of whales in the Erebus and Terror Gulf, about which we shall have more to say later. This expedition, though sent out by the British Government primarily for magnetic surveys, had a most important result fifty years afterwards.

Weddell's voyage in the years 1822–4 through the Antarctic Sea was remarkable not merely because he penetrated further south than any previous navigator had succeeded in achieving, but because his craft were both quite small." Our adventure," wrote Weddell, "was for procuring Fur-seal skins, and our vessels were the brig *Jane*, of Leith, of 160 tons, and the cutter *Beaufoy*, of London, of 65 tons, both fitted out in the ordinary way, and provisioned for two years. The former, with a crew of twenty-two officers and men, was under my own command; the latter, with a crew of thirteen, was commanded by Mr. Matthew Brisbane."

The *Beaufoy*, built like one of the Revenue cutters or yachts with the usual contemporary rig of mainsail, topsail, jib, staysail, and that "spread yard" carried athwart ship ready for setting a squaresail when the wind was aft, was one of the smallest vessels which ever got as near the South Pole as lat. 74° 15′. Those thirteen hands aboard her certainly were out on no picnic. Leaving the Downs on September 17, 1822, they took their departure from Portland Bill, and after calling at Madeira, and

at the Cape Verdes, they were off the east end of the South Orkneys by January 12th.

Seal-skins were obtained; whales were sighted both dead and alive—the former off the South Orkneys, the latter well to the southward of lat. 70° in what we now call the Weddell Sea, but Weddell in his chart names "The Sea of George the Fourth." Thus on February 17th he sighted "many hump and finned black whales," and still going south he writes: "In the evening we had many whales about the ship." On his chart in the position lat. 74° 15′, on the 20th, which was his furthest south, Weddell wrote "many whales in sight." Then going north, his crews having suffered much from cold, fogs and wet during all those weeks in the south, Weddell visited South Georgia. After Cook had been here in the late eighteenth century, several ship-owners sent out vessels and captured sea-elephants for their oil, and fur seals for their skins. At least 20,000 tons of sea-elephant oil were brought from South Georgia to London during the fifty years following Cook's call there, together with a number of seal-skins; "but formerly," says Weddell, "the furriers in England had not the method of dressing them, on which account they were of so little value, as to be almost neglected. At the same time, however, the Americans were carrying from Georgia cargoes of these skins to China, where they frequently obtained a price of from 5 to 6 dollars a-piece." South Georgia altogether during that time yielded to British and other visitors 1,200,000 skins.

Weddell, by the way, tells an interesting story about a certain American captain J. Barnard, whose sealing vessel in the year 1814 had called at the uninhabited New Island, one of the Falklands which had not become British until the year 1771. Barnard, whilst on the south side of the island after the fur

seals, suddenly came across about thirty British subjects, consisting of the crew and several passengers of a wrecked English ship. Barnard was good enough to take them on board and treat them hospitably. Now, at that time England and America were in a state of war, and, although Barnard had promised to land these people at some Brazilian port, the rescued began to have suspicions as to the captain's sincerity.

However, all was apparently going well, and the increased company were split up into hunting parties and sent out to obtain supplies. Captain Barnard with four of his men was on such an excursion when the ungrateful and suspicious rescued British, I regret to say, defied the Americans who were on board, and cut the cable, making off with the ship to Rio de Janeiro, and thence to North America. Barnard had never for a moment imagined that such a scheme was on foot, and when he returned to the anchorage at New Island he was amazed to find his vessel gone. And then, as Barnard explained to Weddell, he began to realize that the motive for this theft was the fear of becoming prisoners of war in America, in spite of his promise already given.

The position now was that Barnard was left with his four men, a dog and a boat on a lonely island at a remote corner of the world. What was to be done? The ship had not even left him a few supplies. However, he remembered that he had planted a few potatoes and in the course of the second season these became serviceable. Moreover the dog caught a wild pig, the skins of the seals were used for clothes and the eggs of the albatross were additional food. To withstand the cold wintry blasts of the Falklands, a house was built of stones. Once a captain, always a captain: once accustomed to handling men and preserving discipline, Barnard was not likely to drop

the habit even on this island. But in course of time his four men wearied of this control, waited their opportunity, and then made off with the boat, leaving the unfortunate skipper, now utterly alone, to himself. However, he spent his solitary days making seal clothes and collecting food for the next winter, twice daily climbing a hill to look out for the possible approach of some ship. But twice every day he returned to that rough stone house with the same disappointment.

And then, after some months, who should come to the island but those four deserting seamen with their boat, having been unable to manage for themselves. But even now they were still recalcitrant, and one of them even went so far as to plan Barnard's death, though the plot was discovered in time. And to teach the men that discipline and punishment were still very real things even under these exceptional conditions, Barnard gave the man a few provisions and then landed him on another small island in solitary confinement. It was a bold step for one officer to defy four mutinous men: but the daring was justified. At the end of three weeks this defiant seaman had become so changed that his conduct, from the time when Barnard fetched him off, commenced to be exemplary. There was no further trouble with any of them, and so, for two years, the party continued to live, using the boat to search the other islands for provisions, until at last in December 1815 there called here an English whaler on her way to the Pacific and thus rescued this little party. It is yet another instance of the adaptability of the sailor to whatever state his fortunes may drive him.

Weddell also confirmed William Smith's report of sperm whales being off the South Shetlands. On one occasion the former even lowered boats and set

out in pursuit; but Weddell believed that the whale became "gallied" through having seen the copper sheathing of his vessel, and so went off out of sight. Smith's discovery of these South Shetlands, which ever since the year 1905 have become such an important whaling station, happened as follows during the year 1819, when he was taking the brig *William* from Monte Video to Valparaiso, and it was purely chance that brought this discovery about. For, on his way in order to round the Horn, he had stood S.S.E., and at six o'clock one evening, when in lat. 62° 30′ S., long. 60° W., actually sighted land to the south-east, afterwards landing and finding seals. Weddell, who also landed on the South Shetlands the year after, had killed as many as a couple of thousand sea-elephants and many more seals there.

The cutter *Beaufoy* made a second voyage on a sealing expedition, in spite of her having already been south for those two years. Leaving the Downs in August 1824, she coasted down Patagonia, called at the Falklands and went to Tierra del Fuego, arriving back in the Downs after eighteen months.

Now the net result of these early explorations was to attract attention to an unknown part of the world, and long years afterwards whales were to be discovered. But as not all explorers were themselves whaling experts there has been some confusion in the statements as to their species, whether sperm whale or rorquals. It is supposed by modern critics that those whales which have ever been seen off the South Shetlands consisted almost entirely of two classes: the blue whale and the hump-backed whale. Ross reported that he had seen in Antarctic water the right whale, but as the result of various Antarctic expeditions, scientific authorities now believe that this explorer may have been mistaken; and that what he saw could only have been fin whales.

But it was not till Emile G. Racovitza, the eminent zoologist of the *Belgica* expedition of 1897–9, applied his efforts that the first methodical scientific study of Antarctic whales was made during the cruise of that vessel. Racovitza was afterwards able to systematize all the reports which had been made on the subject of whales being recorded at different dates and in various Antarctic localities; from which it is now possible to see that these cetaceans have been noted in great numbers in the waters especially of the Ross Sea, South Georgia, South Shetlands and adjacent areas. All this knowledge, so valuable commercially, and of such utility to the convenience of the public, has come only as the result of many expeditions, long voyages and great risks to ships and men.

Historically, the first cetacean which the old sailing ships pursued was the right whale, which has no dorsal fin. In the Atlantic there was the Greenland whale, the nordkaper and the southern right whale. These were remarkable for the size of their whalebone, and at a time when whales were hunted chiefly for the sake of their bone, these became known as the "right" or "true" whale. Moreover, in those days, their harpooning methods prevented the men from attacking the "finners" or rorquals. But then the industry of capturing the sperm whale came in and the chase after right whales became less important. So, also, there came a change in the second part of the nineteenth century arising through Svend Foyn's invention of the explosive harpoon fired from a ship's gun. He began this new form operating off the north of Norway, but it enabled the fin whale, so long neglected, now to be hunted. Thus it was that Norway inaugurated an entirely new era in whaling, since, broadly speaking, the "finners" are the only cetaceans found in that country's waters.

What was more, it opened up an entirely new avenue to knowledge; for, until then, no mammal was scientifically so little understood as the great family of the whale. And the reason for this deficiency was quite simple. Without specimens to study, how could the research student set to work? Whaling ships brought home the produce: not the mammal itself. And only on remote occasions have whales stranded around our coasts. But the Svend Foyn method revolutionized all this: or, rather, part of his plan was a return to that old practice which we have seen existed at Spitzbergen in the early days. The reader will remember that factories were established ashore, the whales towed to the beach and hauled up to be flensed.

Well, this was to be the new Norwegian way in the 'sixties. Land factories were instituted, the "finner" killed by the explosive harpoon was hauled up and dealt with from the land and not from the ship. Thus it was, then, that an opportunity was afforded both to whalers and scientists to examine the shape of the body and the contents of the stomach: in other words, there followed from this a large amount of biological knowledge concerning the cetacean. We know now that the "finner" whether in northern or southern waters is practically the same in form. To the invention of that gun, then, was due the starting of the Norwegian fin-whaling industry: and owing to the inauguration of the latter was it possible to get a greater understanding of whales generally.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE SOURCE OF WEALTH

IN the early days when the approaches to the Antarctic began to be used after the first conviction that it was worth while sailing so far, the British and Americans went either after the seals or to look for the right whale. When the rowing-boats were launched in the South Atlantic they left the fin whales strictly alone. The sperm, like the right whale, usually remained some time on the surface and allowed the rowed boat to approach, but the finner is awash only for a time, and sinks after being killed.

When first that squadron of a dozen British sailing-ship whalers went south in the early eighteenth century, they were complete and self-contained to roam all over the world, extract the produce and boil it down into oil. During the first half of the nineteenth century some five or six hundred whalers were thus engaged in the southern hemisphere hunting the cachalot and right whales. But then, owing to the scarcity of this species, and to the fall in the price of oil and the increased working expenses, the number of vessels in this work became fewer and fewer. They were usually of between 200 and 300 tons register, but sometimes even up to 450 tons. Built of wood, with no engines to require fuel, they could keep the seas as long as food and drinking-water were available.

The right whale as found in Arctic waters had by the eighth decade of the nineteenth century

become so scarce in the Arctic that the industry up there had practically ceased to be profitable. Therefore one of a trio of whaling brothers named Gray conceived the idea of sending their Peterhead whalers down to the Antarctic in order to find better luck. This hope was based on the account given by Sir James Ross, already alluded to, concerning his voyage of discovery in 1842. We are speaking now entirely of the right whale, and the succession of events which will presently lead up to the southern fin whale industry is something of a romance. Fortified with Ross's information, an attempt was made in 1891 to form a company for this southern enterprise, but the necessary capital was not obtained.

However, there followed a Mr. R. Kinnes of Dundee, who decided to equip four vessels with the same object, well believing that the right whales were in the Antarctic and that a fortune was awaiting anyone with a little courage and imagination. It was, of course, a somewhat similar scheme, though in a different part of the southern hemisphere, to that which had been attempted by Enderby. Kinnes selected four ships: the *Balœna*, *Active*, *Diana* and the *Polar Star*. They were all barque-rigged with auxiliary steam and propeller. Of this little squadron the largest was the *Balœna*, being of 260 tons register, length 141 ft., draught 16½ ft., her engines being of only 65 horse-power. Originally she had been the *Mjolnar*, and built in Drammen as far back as 1872. The *Active* was twenty years older, 117 ft. long, draught 18 ft., with engines of 40 horse-power. Built at Peterhead, she was a barque which had done much good service in the olden days. The barque *Diana* had also been built in Drammen, and her details were, length 135 ft., draught 16 ft., engine 40 horse-power. The *Polar Star*, another barque, 105 ft. long, was both old and small, with an engine

of low horse-power; in fact, all four were rather a relic of the golden age of sail than modern exploring vessels.

But in September 1892 the squadron started out from Dundee, that port famous for so much which concerns whalers and whaling. The ships and men had both been in the Arctic many a time. The rigging was extra strong, with the old-fashioned, reliable dead-eyes and lanyards. The thickness of the planking, timbers and lining was in the case of the *Balæna* as much as 32 in. There was nothing yacht-like; everything for strength and endurance. By the middle of December they had got into high latitudes and were steering between the South Orkneys and South Shetlands, when great fin whales were seen: but, of course, this species was no concern of the expedition. Seals were taken, and at one time it was thought that the mammal which was sighted spouting was a right whale, but he turned out to be another "finner."

The Antarctic continent was reached by Christmas, the whale lines were carefully coiled down in the boats ready for those great black whales which Ross had written about. The short-barrelled guns, rather like the weapon you take in a gun-punt, were ready, too; for here was the area that Ross had alluded to as so full of hope. There were three of the four Dundee ships in Erebus and Terror Gulf: but where were the right whales? Was there really a fortune waiting for the asking? Each right whale of the big kind has about a ton of bone in his mouth; and whalebone was worth £2,500 when the ships left Dundee. Supposing each vessel caught only four: that would mean £40,000 to take back home, so every available man was on the keen look-out for right whales. The *Polar Star*, the slowest of the four, had lagged behind, and on the morning after Christ-

mas, whilst the three were at the edge of the pack-ice in lat. 64° 30′ S., long. 55° 28′ W., beating about in the open water, looking for those illusive right whales to show themselves, a strange sail was suddenly sighted. But it was not the *Polar Star*: this was the *Jason*, in which Captain C. A. Larsen, a Norwegian, had arrived. His name is to be noted, for he is perhaps the greatest pioneer of modern South Seas whaling. He, too, had come out for right whales, and for seals, and in the season of 1893–4 he came here a second time with the *Jason*, *Hertha* and the *Castor*.

Captain Larsen had been whaling ever since the year 1884 when he hunted the bottlenose whale in the Arctic. His knowledge and experience thus link the old days with the new, and recently he affirmed that he has found in southern whales various kinds of harpoons which have been sticking in the animals for a considerable period. In one case he discovered a lance which must have been in the cetacean for ten or twenty years. Now on hearing of the intended Dundee expedition, the Norwegians had sent Captain Larsen out for a similar object. The two expeditions thus met on Boxing Day in that region of white ice, the *Jason* having already captured five hundred seals but not having sighted a right whale.

Whatever else they were, these two British and Norwegian expeditions represented the greatest body of expert whaling knowledge, and from them must be reckoned the commencement of two distinct enterprises: modern Antarctic exploration, which was presently to attract such men as Bruce, Scott, Nordenskjold, Charcot, Shackleton and others; and the present great whaling industry which the Norwegians have established by licence from the British Government. And it may be stated without further delay that this Dr. W. S. Bruce was actually with this

first Dundee expedition that we are considering, being aboard the *Balæna*. With him was also Mr. W. G. Burn Murdoch, an artist, from whose charming narrative I have derived much information for this present chapter.

It is interesting to note how the old Dutch whaling expressions still survived aboard the *Balæna*. The "specksioneer" was always ready for his especial job; every man was prepared to turn out of his bunk as soon as that time-honoured whaler's cry "A fall! A fall!" should go resounding through the ship, and boats' crews would rush in wild excitement into their places. The grampus, that prey among whales which will kill even a finner, was seen by the Dundee expedition, but never a right whale; and early in the new year the harpoon lines were taken out of the boats, and the craft were used exclusively for sealing. The *Polar Star* turned up at last, having left Dundee two days later and proceeded south-about through the English Channel, whilst the other three had sailed round the north of Scotland. But it was the middle of January by the time she had joined up with these others.

The squadron's instructions had been to seek whales where Ross had found them, and strict obedience was paid to these admonitions. It must be borne in mind that no Antarctic scientific expedition had been down there since Ross's of 1843, other than some surveys and international circumpolar observations in 1873–4 and 1882 respectively. Therefore for this Dundee venture data were both meagre and fifty years old. During that period Polar discovery had been confined to the Arctic, but the South Polar approaches had been extraordinarily neglected. The *Active* during the latter part of January did have quite a good day's excitement. The right whale did not turn up, but the harpooner

in one of her boats let drive at a great "finner"—a blue whale. The latter soon began using up the three lines in the boat, then a second boat made fast with three more lines, and next a third boat fired another harpoon into the whale. Presently the ends of all the lines were put aboard the *Active*, the boats made fast to the ship's stern, and the whale went towing the whole lot until after fourteen hours' excitement the ship's engines were reversed, the lines broke and the whale went off.

Sport? Yes. But when the four skippers got together and talked matters over, the sad fact had to be faced that as a whaling enterprise this expedition had failed: not a single right whale had been captured, or even sighted. There was nothing for it now but to devote their energies to sealing. This they did, with the result that some twenty thousand seal-skins and full cargoes of seal blubber were taken back to Scotland. The *Jason* was the ship which Nansen had used, as mentioned in his *First Crossing of Greenland*. She was a three-masted barque with auxiliary steam-engines, and she was to come back in the next season with *Hertha* and *Castor*. It was the first of these three vessels which discovered King Oscar Land, and the other two sailed along the west side of Graham Land. Captain Larsen's efforts, though primarily commercial, resulted in adding to the sum of scientific knowledge. *Balæna* discovered some mountainous land S.W. of Erebus and Terror Gulf, and Larsen traced it still further later in that year. But the whales? Well, the Dundee expedition, which got back safely in May 1893, had seen three kinds: the finners, which Larsen called "blue whales"; others resembling the Pacific humpback; and the bottlenose whale, in addition to many grampus. Both the British and Norwegian expeditions had set forth owing to Ross's encouraging

statements, though each of these enterprises failed to confirm his supposition. In Larsen's second voyage of 1893–4 a whale which seemed to be like a right whale was chased but not captured.

That which had been made clearly manifest in these whaler voyages was the fact that there were any number of finner whales in the Antarctic. Now there came to Edinburgh an agent of Mr. Svend Foyn to interview Mr. Burn Murdoch and Dr. W. S. Bruce, who had travelled in the *Balœna*, the latter in the capacity of naturalist. It was suggested that the Norwegian type of whaling (already mentioned) should be employed, but this method was unknown in England, and was rejected before Larsen went on his second voyage. But from 1898 to 1910 there were several Antarctic expeditions of a purely scientific character which must be mentioned in turn. In 1897–9 was the *Belgica* expedition, which was the first of these Antarctic enterprises to be organized on modern lines. The *Belgica* was the first vessel, too, to spend a winter in the Antarctic, and valuable knowledge as to scientific and biological subjects was obtained.

And now there came increased interest in the South Polar regions owing to the enthusiasm of scientists. The immediate results were Captain Scott's British expedition of 1901 and Professor von Drygalski's expedition of the same year. But our immediate subject of whaling attracts us more especially towards the Swedish expedition of 1901–3 owing to the personality of the sailing master. For this undertaking was led by Dr. Nils Otto Gustaf Nordenskjold (nephew of Baron Nordenskjold, the Arctic explorer), and the name of the vessel was the *Antarctica*, in command of which Captain C. A. Larsen was to go. No better officer among the Scandinavians could have been chosen. Now, fortunately—as it turned

out—the *Antarctica* got crushed by the ice in the Erebus and Terror Gulf during the month of February 1903, whilst going to the relief of Nordenskjold's land party. After hazardous adventures the crew were rescued by the Argentine sloop-of-war *Uruguay* in the following November. The immediate result of this was that Larsen was received as an Antarctic hero in Buenos Ayres, his scheme for southern whaling on those Norwegian lines was believed in, the Argentine citizens financed him and there was formed the company known as the Cia Argentina de Pesca, with a view to carrying on whaling operations at South Georgia.

This was the commencement of that great southern whaling industry, which has in twenty years yielded considerable wealth. The company began its operations in 1904, a lease being granted by His Majesty's Government two years later. This station is on the east side of the island at Grytviken, the terms being 500 acres at an annual rent of £250 for a term of 21 years. Three years later 30 acres at Jason Harbour were leased to the same company for 18 years at a rent of £100; and between the years 1908 and 1911 seven other leases on that island, also for whaling stations, were granted to four Norwegian and three British companies, making a total whaling fleet of twenty-one vessels, each lease allowing the employment of one floating factory.

Thus we have here, in the foundation of these considerable industrial activities on that remote island where Shackleton was eventually to be buried, a direct connection with the failure of Arctic whaling, and those scientific and whale-seeking expeditions to the Antarctic. In the end, as a result of much perseverance, immense financial reward has come. Larsen tried unavailingly to obtain the necessary capital in his own country, but the undertaking

might have been started twelve years sooner by British capital after that interview in Edinburgh following the return of the Dundee squadron.

Of this first, and Argentine, company Larsen was made manager. He crossed to Norway, fitted out at Sandefjord a modern steam whaler, and two small sailing vessels to be used as transports, arriving at the east side of South Georgia in December 1904. In King Edward's Cove, as it is now known, he established a whaling factory on the very site which had been used by the early nineteenth-century sealers for boiling their blubber. Nothing succeeds like success, and the result of this new development was that more companies were formed, further leases were granted, and the largest whaling business in the world is now centred in the Dependencies of the Falklands. Thus also even at Deception Island a licence was granted for twenty-one years in 1912 to a Norwegian company: in fact, up to date eight Norwegian, one Chilian and one British companies have been given licences in the area of the South Shetlands and Graham Land. The season here is a short one, lasting from November to March. In the South Orkneys whales are plentiful, but there is a lack of safe harbours, and it is usually safe for the floating factories to remain in the roadstead only for twelve weeks. Four Norwegian companies were granted licences here in the season of 1914–15, but only one was actually worked. Operations were, however, resumed in 1922–3, when 325 whales were caught. The first attempt here had been made in 1907–8, but the ice drove the expedition to the South Shetlands. In the season of 1914–15 a solid sheet of ice surrounded the South Orkneys for a hundred miles to the north and made them unapproachable till after the middle of January. At the South Sandwich Islands there was whaling in the 1911–12

season, but on these territories some of the volcanoes are still active, the constant emission of poisonous fumes makes it difficult to land, and no shore station has been established.

Were there, after all, right whales in these southern areas? The answer may be made from the statistics which have been issued for the period covering the years 1909–18, during which many thousands of blue and fin whales were caught, but only 396 right whales and 115 sperm whales. These figures are for South Georgia, South Shetlands, South Orkneys and South Sandwich. Some idea may be obtained of the wealth which Larsen's pioneering brought about, for the value of the oil, baleen and guano in the South Georgian area alone has risen from £251,077 in 1909–10 to £1,100,000 in the 1917–18 season. But according to the very latest Government report there were caught in these Dependencies during the 1922–3 season close on 10,000 whales to the value of £3,056,860. These figures are so remarkable, that it is scarcely necessary to comment on them beyond observing that the possibilities of these valuable British possessions seem not to have been as fully realized as one might expect. When, however, the *Discovery* returns home from her investigations, doubtless further interest will be taken by British and other investors.

CHAPTER XIX

PROBLEMS AND PRACTICE

NOW that we have been able to see the intimate connection between those early Antarctic explorers and the culmination of a large and flourishing southern whaling industry, we are in a better position to appreciate the situation in further detail.

It is with this subject, as it certainly was with the discovery, hundreds of years ago, of the route to India via the Cape of Good Hope; in regard to all Arctic and Antarctic exploration; and, indeed, concerning some of the greatest wonders in modern applied science. The progress was gradual rather than sudden: it was the steady advance, rather than the flying visit. A scientist makes certain facts clear, and from these data united with others there is eventually rendered practicable wireless telephony. So it was in regard to whaling. Without all those previous experiences learned in Arctic whaling, and without that geographical knowledge and those observations of whales obtained by various Antarctic expeditions, the sudden rise of the modern industry in the Falkland Dependencies would not have been justified.

Roald Amundsen, the first man ever to reach the South Pole, remarked that "it is not too much to say of Captain Larsen that of all those who have visited the Antarctic regions in the search of whales, he has unquestionably brought home the best and most abundant scientific results." But Larsen was indebted to a long line of shipbuilders, to many

generations of Dutch, British, American, Norwegian and other harpooners. Without all those years of Arctic whaling knowledge, how would it have been possible to set going on right principles this industry in the British Dependencies? To take a small point: that little squadron of *Balæna* and her three sisters, which brought home the news that the southern seas were abounding in finners, had in 1892 only just returned from working the Arctic seas in the late summer of that year. They were merely typical whalers of small size, built and sheathed according to accumulated knowledge, tested by years of hard experience. The result was that they were able to leave in that same September for the Antarctic. The whole history of northern whaling is bound up with that of the south, just as all Polar exploration and observation are inseparably connected with the evolution of this important industry.

If it is the whaler whose ship-model has repeatedly been used for transporting the scientist, then the latter has come back with more systematized information by which to aid the adventurous merchant. I am stressing this point of mutual assistance, since too often we are tempted to be influenced only by the final achievement and forget all the weary steps which had preceded it. "The recent Antarctic Expeditions," wrote Dr. Jean Charcot of the *Pourquois Pas?* expedition of 1908–10, speaking in reference to this southern commercial whaling activity, "from de Gerlache's down to that of the *Français*, have certainly done much for this revival of industry in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic regions, and I personally claim to have done my small part, though I should have liked to see my fellow-countrymen, severely tested as they have often been in the cod-fisheries, attempting to take advantage of it."

And, again, Charcot wrote: "It was three years

ago that the chase of the balænoptera began in our exploration zone; and in the South Shetlands since our visit, one Chilian and two Norwegian companies have set up at Deception, while another has taken as its headquarters Admiralty Bay in George I Land. As far as these whalers are concerned, it has been a pleasure to me to note how useful the *Français* Expedition has been to them in supplementing the discoveries of the *Belgica*; for we were able, of ourselves, to supply them with the only existing chart of the north-west coast of the Palmer Archipelago, and another of the Bismarck estuary, to guide them to a good anchorage at Port Lockroy and a shelter at Wandel Island, to say nothing of our notes on the numbers and species of balænoptera, on the movements of the ice-floes, on the winds. etc."

For it was during his first expedition of 1903–5 in the *Français* that Dr. Charcot had carried out extensive exploration on the west coast of Graham Land, and discovered that good harbour of Port Lockroy in Wiencke Island, and moderate shelter at Port Charcot in Booth-Wandel Island. The second of the scientist's expeditions was that of 1908–10 in the *Pourquois Pas?* which covered a wider range and brought about important discoveries. Thus, for example, we cannot yet tell how valuable commercially it may be that he measured and accurately placed, during this second voyage, Adelaide Island; that he proved Alexander Land to be an island, and that Charcot Land, right as far south as lat. 70°, was discovered. But of the greatest immediate value was the hydrographic work which he carried out from the South Shetlands and among the isles at the western side of Graham Land. How valuable such efforts are industrially may be at once understood when we realize that recently this hydrographic information was lacking to the whaling ships. Thus

in the year 1918 the Norwegian s.s. *Solstreif*, a vessel of 3,409 registered tons, employed as a whaling factory in the South Shetlands and by Graham Land, got ashore on a rock near Cape Melville, and another steamer named the *Ornen* was nearly on these self-same rocks. The s.s. *Telefon*, ten years previously, got on the rocks by the south-west entrance to Admiralty Bay, and became a total wreck.

On the other hand there was found by whalers in 1918, at the west side of Pendulum Cove, a document conveniently left behind by Dr. Charcot, headed "Notice to Navigators," containing such useful information as in the following extracts: "I think I ought to warn all navigators who may go to Wandel with the intention of staying at Port Charcot that a ship is far from being in safety there during the north-east winds, which are by far the most prevalent and the most violent in this region. . . . A chain stretched across the entrance of the bay and securely fastened at both ends, may protect to a certain extent the ship from the ice blocks, but hawsers, even of steel wire, are soon cut."

Such information as this begins that body of Sailing Directions which, by the experience of some hundreds of years and many voyagings, have been compiled for other parts of the world, enabling shipping of all sorts to proceed on their lawful occasions. Charcot and others risked their ships, and the lives of their crews, to get that essential information which will go on being added to till some day it is complete. There is a passage in his *Voyage of the "Why Not?"* which illustrates how those early whalers of 1909, whom he frequently met down south, used to rely on his help.

"Lastly," he writes on December 18th, "the whale men are very anxious to know whether there cannot be found in the bays of Joinville Island some good

anchorages, at which they could carry on their work. It comes within the scope of our duties to discover this for ourselves and to try to bring the information back to them." And in another place he remarks: "The whalers . . . are upset, for hunting is bad this season. . . . A naturalist would find interesting microscopic study in the subject of whale-food—the infinitely small denizens of the water—which must count for much in explaining the routes the whales follow; and science once again would hereby render eminent services to commerce."

The present hydrographical position is that there still remains a very large amount of work to be done before the surveys of the whaling areas are anything like complete and safe for navigation. And where the working season is annually not more than five or six months, it follows that some years must elapse before satisfactory charts will be available. But this matter, so far as the Falklands Dependencies are concerned, is thoroughly in hand. For, even when we were in the midst of a great war, and during that most critical of all years, 1917, when German submarines had reduced our Mercantile Marine to such seriously low figures, the British Government was commencing an inquiry into the preservation of the whaling industry concerned with these Dependencies. The result was that a special interdepartmental committee was set going, which recommended, *inter alia*, that the food of whales should be carefully investigated as well as the migration of the sperm whale to southern waters. Investigations were also to be made in regard to the breeding-grounds, and it was pointed out that a complete hydrographical survey was necessary both for navigation generally, and for the local interests of the whaling industry. It was as a result of the committee's findings that Scott's old ship the *Discovery*—herself built on

the lines of the old Dundee whalers—was fitted out at Portsmouth in the early summer of 1925 and despatched to the seas of which we have been speaking, there to act as a research vessel.

But in the meantime we have to bear in remembrance that it was owing to those British pioneers, mentioned elsewhere, that these localities are ours. Already in the season of 1908–9, when Charcot was down there and three whaling companies were working on Deception Island with floating steamers as factories, and the smaller specially built steamers going out to catch the whales, there were two hundred Norwegian inhabitants of that island. The season lasts from the end of November to the end of February, when the companies separate; some to hunt off the Chilian coast, others in the Magellan Straits, others in the waters of the Cape of Good Hope. In regard to the South-West African whaling, where the humpback, fin and blue whales are captured annually, Saldanha Bay is largely used, as well as Durban, for eastern whaling. In the year 1912 only 131 whales were caught off that part of Africa, but they have since been captured in much greater numbers; and even in 1916 the figures were considerably over eight hundred.

The numbers of right whales and sperm whales caught in the waters of the Dependencies are so few compared with the thousands of the blue, fin and humpback, that we can neglect them. The humpback may be in danger of extermination, but it is of little commercial value, and the other two are plentiful. The practical method by which the men can recognize the different kinds at a distance is as follows. These three belong to the rorqual class, the humpback being known by the protuberance on his back and by the fact that he spouts very low. The fin whale is of medium value, has a very large dorsal fin, and

spouts very high with a single, straight jet. The blue whale, on the other hand, which is more valuable than the other two, has a moderate-sized dorsal fin and spouts with a double jet ending in a plume.

For the sake of clarity and continuity we have concentrated on one particular branch of development. Let us now go back a little way. The whole possibility of this modern Dependencies' whaling has been based on those new methods inaugurated in the eighteen-sixties by that Norwegian expert Svend Foyn, who had been impressed, whilst voyaging to the Arctic for seals, by the large numbers of finners. Why not hunt this species? After three years he got over the difficulties and introduced his special explosive harpoon, and by doing away with the old method of using the boat, eliminated the risk to crews. It was now the year 1865, the time when the gallant old sailing ship in the clippers and others was making her last flutter: for steam was beginning to conquer navigation.

Svend Foyn, substituting the steamer for the sailing ship's rowed boat, made it possible for the harpoon-gun to be brought quite close to the finner. (It is true that way back in 1731 a portable harpoon-gun had been invented, but this was found very dangerous, although others followed.) Moreover, since a dead finner sinks and its weight is much greater than the buoyancy of the rowed whaleboat, it was no good thinking of hunting this species unless the size of the craft were increased. Thus, in a sentence, the conditions demanded that a steamer with a harpoon-gun in the bows be employed. With many improvements this method is that of modern whaling. When the animal is hit, the two shanks of the harpoon open out and explode a small bomb. The body of the dead whale is then hauled back by means of the ship's steam windlass, inflated to prevent its

sinking, and then towed to the floating factory or shore, the steam whaler, or "catcher" as the modern term is, sometimes being seen with as many as half a dozen dead cetaceans.

As a result of his new methods, Svend Foyn of Tonsberg died a very wealthy man, and the acknowledged expert of all the Norwegian whalers. But it was only through his plucky perseverance and originality that the problem of killing the supposedly invulnerable finner had been made practicable. What was more, it was thus through him that a new industry was to arise in Norway. Now, then, let us watch the sequence of events. In June 1893 those four Dundee whalers, after their unsuccessful voyage, had arrived back in Dundee. There happened to be living a Mr. H. H. Bull, who was also inspired by the Antarctic whaling proposition, but had failed to interest Australian capitalists in the scheme. Bull therefore left Melbourne, travelled to Norway and got in touch with Foyn, then over eighty years old. The latter listened and approved, and even placed at Bull's disposal a whaler, built at Drammen as far back as the year 1871. This vessel was similar to the Dundee *Balæna*, and now, changing her name from *Cap Nor* to *Antarctic*, under the command of Captain L. Kristensen, with Mr. Bull on board, set off in September 1893, reached Melbourne the following January, left it in the following September, got within the Antarctic Circle, sighted Cape Adare for the first time it had been seen since Ross's voyage, visited Possession Island, but after being as far south as lat. 74°, it was decided to return. For commercially this voyage had been a failure, and not a "right" whale had been seen.

And so the intimate relationship between whaling and discovery, between the genuine whaling ships and the exploration vessels built on the lines of whalers,

went on. The whaling expert was indebted to the explorer, and the explorer to the whaler. Two more instances of these in regard to personnel may here be cited. Let us mention, for instance, the name of C. E. Borchgrevink, a Norwegian by birth, but a British colonial land-surveyor by experience. So keen was he to go with Kristensen and Bull that he signed on as ordinary seaman in the *Antarctic*. After his return in 1895, Borchgrevink unsuccessfully tried to get up a trading expedition to Victoria Land, but three years later persuaded Sir George Newnes to fit out the *Pollux*, another Norwegian whaler similar to *Balæna*, yet with new and more powerful engines. The name *Pollux* was changed to *Southern Cross*; there went as captain Bernhard Jensen, who had been Borchgrevink's shipmate as second mate of that whaler *Antarctic*, Jensen having for many years been in command of an Arctic whaler. The *Southern Cross* left the Thames in August of 1898, and proceeded via Hobart to the Antarctic; but the value which accrued from this expedition was interesting rather from a pioneering point of view than scientifically.

So also Dr. W. S. Bruce, who had originally gone out in *Balæna*, took part in the Jackson-Harmsworth expedition of 1894–7 to the Arctic, and then led the Scottish National Antarctic expedition of 1902–4. It is one of the most remarkable facts about men who have served in the Arctic and Antarctic that they are to be found longing to repeat the experience. Bruce had yearned to go out again to the Weddell Sea, and now another Norwegian whaler, the *Hekla*, was bought, rebuilt and named the *Scotia*. As captain of her there went Thomas Robertson of Dundee, who had been captain of the *Active*—one of those four Dundee whalers which had met Captain Larsen on that other expedition in the south.

The *Scotia* was a three-masted barque, with auxiliary steam, of about 400 tons, measuring 140 ft. long and drawing about 15 ft. Her best speed under steam was eight knots. She was immensely strong, with 9 ft. of solid timber at the stem, and even amidships her thinnest part was never less than 2 ft. thick. She was further protected by green-heart sheathing, this wood being chosen for its ability to resist the grinding by the ice. She started out from the Clyde in November 1902, called at the Falklands, and in February sighted the South Orkneys. The furthest south was attained in lat. 74° 1′ S., long. 22° W., and the ship got back to the Clyde in May 1904. The achievements of Dr. Bruce's expedition included many important deep-sea soundings and dredgings, investigations as to both temperature and salinity in the Weddell Sea, the discovery of Coats Land for 150 miles; the wintering at the South Orkneys, important hydrographical survey work, and the establishment of a meteorological station on Laurie Island. Many whales were seen just before entering the Antarctic Circle; and between Buenos Ayres and the Falklands also sperm whales. In the comparatively high latitude of 56° 55′ S., and long. 10° W., many humpbacked whales were sighted "but never any of the bowhead or right whale, which carries the gold-mine in its mouth." Many whales were seen by this ship also off the South Shetlands.

Finally, it may be mentioned that Amundsen, on that expedition which culminated in discovering the South Pole, reported that he saw from the *Fram* both finners and blue whales. Shackleton, whose penultimate expedition left England in 1914, just as the Great War was beginning, and was wrecked by the ice, escaped to Elephant Island (one of the South Shetlands), and then undertook that wonderful boat journey to South Georgia. During this ill-fated

expedition there were sighted both finners and blue whales, but it is to be noted that two sperm whales were seen in lat. 69° 59′ S., long. 17° 36′ W. Very few whales were found in the Falklands area, but eight bottlenose whales were seen in lat. 67° 47′ S., long. 52° 18′ W.

To sum up, then, the present position of whaling has shifted from the Arctic to the Antarctic in regard to the chief sphere of activity. The spirit which has actuated both explorers and fishers has been of necessity one of determination to endure cold and discomforts, together with a tremendous sympathy with seafaring. Great physical strength, the ability to bear severe Polar cold and being cramped up in comparatively small ships; that quiet, unemotional determination of the northerner to succeed in spite of all obstacles: it is these qualities which have always been possessed especially by the Scotsman and the Scandinavian. Thus it is that in the history of whaling and Antarctic voyagings we find such North European names as Ross, Weddell, Bruce, Foyn, Larsen, Kristensen, Borchgrevink, Nordenskjold and others.

In the times when the Greenland and Spitzbergen whaling industry was at its height, Britain possessed a valuable and wonderful national asset in that numerous and highly skilled floating population of hardy crews. In their prime, after they had become sufficiently expert, no nation had more able whaling men or better whaling ships. Then the pride of the occupation passed to the United States, and now it belongs almost exclusively to the Norwegians. Britain has never possessed many whaling crews accustomed to the use of the explosive harpoon. It is to men of only a certain primitive hardy temperament that this occupation of spending a large part of the year in the cold and bitter weather can possibly

appeal. A few Shetlanders from Scotland have tried it, but even they do not long remain attracted.

At first sight it seems utterly illogical that whilst the Dependencies' whaling stations are in British territory, most of the personnel of the ships and the capital is Norwegian. There are thirteen Norse companies to three British and one Argentine. Before the war most of the whaling gear was manufactured in Norway, though since then some of it, such as the whaling lines and the foregoers—that strong, pliable portion of the line immediately attached to the harpoon—have been successfully made in Great Britain. The crews of the British transports are British, but the harpooners, the men on the shore stations and in floating factories, the crews and gunners in the whale-catchers, are practically all Norwegians. Had that Dundee squadron of 1892–3, when it went south, been equipped with modern guns and gear for dealing with finners instead of the old-fashioned apparatus for the bowhead whales which they never saw, it is possible that all this sudden wealth of South Georgia and vicinity might have come to Great Britain. The rise of the industry has been amazing and it is still becoming more profitable, and there can surely be few occupations which have in twenty years so handsomely rewarded investors.

On the other hand it cannot be ignored that the question of temperament and difference in national character is likely to prevent the British seaman, accustomed to serve all his life in tramps and liners, from banishing himself to endure cold in a desolate corner of the globe. Still, if we have lost the whaling industry, we have in the steam-trawler and steam-drifter fleets both men and ships far superior to those of any generation. It is only from these that recruits for a new British whaling industry are likely to be

obtained. But I cannot conceive that under present circumstances the men are likely to be lured so far away when even the trawlers which fish in Icelandish waters can see their homes and families frequently. And yet a fleet of modern steam whale-catchers, with their trained gunners, is certainly something of which to be proud nationally, and likely to be of great use at the outbreak of war.

A gunner is paid well in these whale-catchers. Leaving Norway at the beginning of September and arriving back home in the following June, he earns the equivalent of about £700, if based on South Georgia, but wages are higher at South Shetlands owing to the longer duration of light and therefore longer working hours. But it must not be forgotten that in these catchers the work continues day and night, without any fixed hours, and with very little time off. The gunner is naturally a man of great skill and long training, worth his wages and bonus. But the seamen and engineers must also be willing and picked men of special training; for next to the importance of harpooning a whale is the ability to sight him. The look-out man in the crow's-nest must be able both to see and to discern: so, too, the steersman must be no ordinary quartermaster but specially accomplished to act promptly in accordance with the gunner's instructions. As to the engineer, he, too, requires some training, especially in the need of fuel economy: for these whale-catchers burn about six tons of coal a day, and the cost of coal in South Georgia reaches as much as £14 a ton.

There is also this other difference to be remembered. In the olden days there was a big whaling community at Hull, Peterhead, Dundee and other ports. The ships belonged there, the crews' homes were there also. Nowadays these are fishing communities, and it would take a long time to build up

a whaling community in Britain, from which men would go to the Dependencies every year in the whale-catchers. But in Norway it is different, for there are whaling communities in Tonsberg, Sandefjord and Larvik: and all those Norwegian whaling companies operating in the Falklands Dependencies belong either to these three ports or to Christiania or Hangesund. There can be no possible doubt that the British seaman of the fisherman type would be the best kind of whaler for this class of work: and the readiness with which British fishermen, who had never even fired a shot-gun previously, became during the war thoroughly good gunners, is proof enough that if they could hit submarines at long range they could certainly strike whales at close range.

But there are all sorts of difficulties: of temperament—yes: of working with foreigners: of working under aliens; problems, also, in regard to sailors' and firemen's unions. But where the pay is so attractive and the season from leaving home to getting back is not more than ten months, it is conceivable that some day British crews in British whale-catchers under British gunners may be hunting the whale with as much enthusiasm and skill as in those days when the fleets used to go from the Thames and east-coast ports. We have the men and we have the ships. There remain only the will and the determination.

CHAPTER XX

MODERN WHALERS AND THEIR METHODS

THE days when the three-masted barque or ship roamed round the world pursuing the whale from ocean to ocean are as definitely past and gone as are the types of whalers and their methods. To-day the vessels are steel-built and steam-driven, and they are spoken of as "whale-catchers." So, too, the explosive harpoon has done away with the need of boat-work and hand-harpoons.

Unquestionably much of the romance, such as we used to read of in the nineteenth-century novels, has disappeared also. That is inevitable, for the twentieth century is an age of strenuous action rather than of sentiment. It is carry on or get out: beauty and imagination, or the method of doing things, cannot demand the same attention as the achievement itself. The merchant who at heart really loves the sight of a sailing-ship cannot afford to send his goods overseas except in a mechanically propelled vessel, however much his sense of beauty prompts and tempts him. In the same way whaling efficiency has little or no use for any except those splendid small steamers, with their harpoon-gun at the bows and well-organized factories at the shore base, on which the ship depends for her coal and stores, and the company relies for the preparation of the whale produce.

Before the Great War the standardized steam whale-catcher measured anything from 98 ft. to

115 ft. over all, with 18 to 22 ft. beam and moulded depth of 11 ft. to 12 ft. 9 in. She was flush-decked, cut away at bow and stern for reasons of extreme handiness, with a speed of 11 to 12 knots; whereas in the old sailing days they were slow, and varied from 150 to about 450 tons. To-day the whale-catcher has evolved into a vessel of from 150 to 180 tons, of a type that shows a kind of amalgamation of the steam trawler and the ocean-going tug. For extreme handiness and exceptional seaworthiness combined, these little steamers are unrivalled. And when you consider that they have to steam from Northern Europe, down the North Sea and Atlantic, cross the Equator, wrestle with those heavy gales and the treacherous ice near the Antarctic Circle, chasing the cetacean past unsurveyed coasts, and entering harbours barely safe from wind and ice, surely as much is asked of a ship as ever a man could have the heart.

If we select an average post-war type we may take a whale-catcher of 105 ft. long, 20 ft. beam and 12 ft. depth, fitted with three-cylinder engines, having a boiler pressure of 200 lb. to the square inch. The average speed is up to 15 knots: but inasmuch as this is inferior to the speed at which a whale can travel, the cetacean is hunted only when feeding. To give greater engine power than this would be too costly in regard to that very expensive item of coal in South Georgia; and would mean a bigger ship. Neither is desirable. The engines are placed aft, where the ship draws 12 ft., the draught forward being about 9 ft. And in order to make her more handy still, each vessel is fitted with a centre rudder. Abaft the foremast is a powerful winch, which is most essential in these craft. It may be mentioned here that the whale being moderately sensitive to sound, motor-boats are useless for this work. They were tried, but made too much noise.

The catcher has a fine, healthy sheer forward, with a nice flare. The rounded forefoot is rather that of a sailing yacht than a steamship, but everything about her suggests strength and wholesomeness. At the same time these are really pretty eye-pleasing craft. Mounted right forward is the muzzle-loading harpoon-gun, on a swivel; and so nicely balanced that when loaded with charge and harpoon it can be raised and trained readily. The bore is 3 in., the gun being 45 in. long. On the extreme end of the fore-deck, below the gun, is a pair of stout rollers over which the harpoon lines are run. The harpoon itself is of the finest tempered Swedish steel, 6 ft. in length and of over a hundredweight. This harpoon, unlike the old-fashioned type, has four prongs, which spring out to an angle of forty-five degrees when the line tightens after the harpoon has struck inside the whale's body.

Now at the point of the modern harpoon is a conical bomb over a foot long and filled with gun-powder. A time fuse fires this bomb three seconds after the harpoon has left the muzzle of the gun. Attached to the harpoon come sixty fathoms of the finest Italian hemp, which every seafarer admires for its handiness and disinclination to kink even with the wet. This foregoer is of about 4-in. stuff, and lies ready coiled on a platform close to the gun. When the gunner gets his chance one shot should finish the whale, but it may happen that two or three harpoons are necessary. This foregoer—or "foreganger" as the old term used to be—is secured to the harpoon's shank by means of a ring, whilst the other end of the rope is spliced to a 5-in. whale line of 120 fathoms; but of course this may be lengthened by bending on other lines.

At the top of the foremast is the crow's-nest, which is entered by climbing the rigging; this steel

mast being of a more substantial kind than is customary in tugs and trawlers. The look-out man having indicated the whale, or a school of whales, everything on the part of the steersman and engine department is done so that speed and manœuvring will enable the gunner to hit the whale just as the latter is rising after his submersion. On the other hand, the whale may not oblige by emerging just ahead: he may be on the ship's beam, or even astern. It is for this reason that the extreme handiness was given to the ship's design, so that she can swing round quickly and find her target in the position required. The usual range is only 25 yds., and the gun's charge is about 14 oz. of powder.

If the whale has been rightly struck in a vulnerable part, he should die immediately, and will begin to sink. That powerful steam winch, placed between bridge and foremast, now comes into use. So soon as the sinking whale has caused the line to hang straight down it is passed to the snatch-blocks which are above the shrouds of the foremast, and so the line comes to the winch. As the winch revolves, the ship and whale are mutually drawn, but there is now a risk that with the rolling of heavy whale and heavy steel ship in the Antarctic swell the line may suddenly part. In order to prevent such an occurrence, there is a special arrangement of powerful volute springs (called an "accumulator") which is fitted in the bottom of the ship along the keelson from the collision bulkhead forward right away to the stokehold aft.

These steel springs are in double rows and connected by flexible wire ropes to those two snatch-blocks, one of which is on either side of the mast. Thus, now that the securing tackle has been led to the accumulator by way of those masthead blocks, any sudden jerk on the rope is borne by the spiral

springs. In other words, the rise and fall are compensated for. But there are occasions when the whale has not been shot dead, and then enters the skill of the gunner, who has to display the ability of the angler. The steam winch has to be moved very carefully, as an angler winds in his reel; and the engine-room staff below must see that the propeller goes ahead or astern in quick obedience to the telegraph: for this is the most critical time of the proceedings.

The whale being now dead, and the winch having hauled him to the surface of the sea, a chain is passed round the cetacean's tail and made fast to the towing bits, the foregoer is taken from the harpoon, and the whale is ready to be towed alongside the ship tail foremost. But, in order to prevent the carcase from sinking, a hole is pierced in it and a hollow harpoon or tube is inserted. Through this tube the whale is pumped full of air, this air pipe leading down to a steam-driven compressor in the engine-room. It is rather like inflating an enormous Rugby football. Afterwards the air tube is withdrawn and the harpoon shanks unscrewed, the heads being recovered later on.

The whaler may now return to her base, perhaps with several whales towing alongside: sometimes with as many as ten. These craft have a very strenuous life during that short season and rest only on Sundays. Having coaled and provisioned, they spend the remainder of the time at work, the crew being in watches as in any other ship: but the moment a whale is sighted every deck hand rushes up, so that in practice the hands can rarely obtain four consecutive hours of sleep, and more frequently they never take their clothes off for twenty-four whole hours. The first real rest for captain and crew comes only after several whales are being towed back and it is impossible to go after any more for the present.

Then, and not till then, is it possible for human nature to catch up with delayed sleep. On the other hand, what with their monthly wage and big bonus, and being away from Norway only from September to June, the men stick it out as something quite worth while. Whale-meat is eaten by the men with relish, and has been compared with the best veal; but it does not keep and must be cut from the cetacean as soon as he is killed.

These little whale-catchers are kept beautifully clean and comfortably fitted up; and I wonder sometimes that those who care to do their yachting with steam power do not build one of this type instead of some rather useless vessels that one sees round the coast. For these catchers are both good-looking and able to go anywhere in any weather; but you cannot say all this of most steam yachts. A heavy sea is preferred by the catcher whilst hunting, for the whale's body shows itself more conspicuously and thus affords a better target. But up and down the lonely coast of South Georgia and islands of that cold sea, skirting the rocks and keeping a smart eye lifting all the time for the spouting vapour which will indicate the distant whale, hour after hour, watch after watch may pass before any luck comes along. For the animal has the sense to be wary, after the loss of so many relatives. Close on ten thousand whales captured yearly in the waters of the Falklands Dependencies cannot be ignored if we think of the future, although it has not yet been proved that whaling in these waters will become exhausted as has been the case in other parts of the globe.

Again and again the whale escapes before the gunner can get a fair opportunity, but at last the animal may be sighted sailing along unsuspectingly. It is then for the catcher to be manœuvred cautiously and adroitly so as to work into the required position.

And now goes the harpoon-gun! The blue whale has been hit, the foam is being cast up all around him, and he disappears with remarkable suddenness, but a prisoner all the same. Out goes the line more quickly than rushing thought, the windlass is about to haul it in again, but suddenly the tension ends: the harpoon has broken off, and the whale has been lost—dead, but sinking to the bottom until three days shall have passed. These animals love to haunt the vicinity of ice-masses: and in a season when the bergs are few, the hunting may be poor. A whale's period of gestation is about a year, and the persistence with which these southern whales are now being hunted gives no time for the stock to be increased. And it has been found that, having become knowledgeable, they now alter their former cruising areas and take different routes through other straits and round other islands.

In spite of the cold and hard gales, the climate in the seas of the Falklands Dependencies is very healthy, but the lack of fresh provisions is regrettable. At South Georgia, where there are shore factories for dealing with the whales, there is a population of 1,337 human beings, of whom all are males, except for three: and at least 1,000 of the community are natives of Norway and Sweden. Here, too, are the workshops and stores, special transport ships bringing to the island provisions, stores and coal, and taking back the oil which has been extracted from the whales that the fleet of catchers bring. For these modern hunters are not fitted with reducing plant and merely tow the carcases to be handed over either to the floating factory or to the shore station. At South Georgia, for example, the reducing is carried on chiefly at shore stations: but at the South Shetlands there is only one site in Deception Harbour, so floating factories become essential.

The floating factories consist of the hulls of old steamers and sailing-ships; or, more recently, they are converted steamships fitted up with all the latest plant. These vessels are moored in convenient, sheltered harbours, the carcases being brought alongside. There is on board extensive deck machinery, with great derricks capable of lifting 50-ton weights. Forward is the blubber factory, with the flensing deck erected above the main deck. In these up-to-date floating factories elevators, driven by independent steam-engines, are employed for feeding the blubber to the blubber vats, the latter being placed on each side of the ship. In the holds are the oil-tanks, fitted up in much the same way as in an oil-carrying ship, but before the whale oil finally gets down there it has to pass through clearing, skimming and refuse tanks.

At the after end of the ship is the flesh and bone factory. Here an additional wooden deck has been built up, the whale flesh passing direct into the boilers through openings on deck. The whale being brought alongside this floating factory, it is secured at the fore end of the latter, and the flensers then proceed to strip off the blubber, which is lifted on board by the derricks to the flensing deck in strips about 50 ft. in length, 4 ft. wide, and over 1 ft. in thickness. After the blubber has been stripped from one side, the carcase is turned over by special winches, so that the other side can be dealt with.

The blubber is on this flensing deck cut into short lengths and passed down the shoots, where it is sliced by revolving hack knives; and thence it is taken up by the elevators and dropped into other shoots, and so into the blubber vats, into which steam is turned for several hours whilst the oil is being extracted. Steam is then shut off, and for about half an hour the whole mass is stirred. More steam-

ing follows, and then the contents are allowed to settle, the water is drawn off from the bottom, the oil is strained and tapped, and finally reaches the cargo tanks below.

When the blubber has been stripped off the whale, the carcase is removed to the after part of the ship, where the head and tail are cut off, as well as the sides, backbone and other portions likely to yield oil. Steam-driven saws cut the pieces into convenient size and the oil is extracted in the boilers by steam. These floating factories, of course, vary in size, but an average one can deal with as many as nine blue whales a day of the big kind, or sixteen of the smaller types. All this shows how systematized the operation has now become in comparison with the flensing carried on during those days when the sailing whaler was self-contained and independent of a base. There can be no sort of doubt that the modern method is far more efficient on the principle of sub-division of labour. The catchers are free to confine their attention to hunting and killing: the factories are ready to do the rest when once the whale has been towed alongside. Thus, in a season, one of these factory ships may deal with as many as six hundred whales.

Bluntly stated, it would seem as if by this wholesale process of meticulous organization and ingenious machinery the entire operation was impossible of romance. And yet I can see that this is not so. We can leave out that long voyage to the Antarctic and back where these factory steamships lie cut off from the rest of the world for months. But is there not something more than interesting in the arrangements which make such a vessel independent for a long while? She is not merely a factory, but a depot ship to the catchers, and able to meet any contingency, repair their hulls, engines and auxiliaries, in addition

to being able to do the same for her own mass of machinery. She carries a complete engineering shop with lathes and drilling machines, a blacksmith's shop with its forges, and a carpenter's shop also.

A hundred and fifty men have to be accommodated, and fed for eight months straight on end. This vessel has to pass through the tropics to a region of great cold: so there are problems of ventilation and heating: nor are these the only ones. Coal and water? Well, the bunkers, tanks, 'tween decks, and indeed every available space must be filled up with fuel on setting forth, for this coal has to cover the following items: the factory ship's long voyage out, the running of the numerous auxiliaries for several months as if she were some works ashore, the supplying of bunker fuel to the whale-catchers, which each consume six tons a day, and on the top of all this there must be enough coal left for the factory steamer herself to get back home.

As to the matter of water, this is a real difficulty; for a floating factory consumes about eighty tons a day. On the other hand her distillers and evaporators produce, if needs be, a hundred tons of water daily. But this, again, means the expenditure of much valuable coal. For this purpose the ship carries a number of specially constructed boats suitable for conveying water. These boats are towed by motor-boat to the shore, the water is collected from the melting snow and ice, taken back to the ship and transferred by pumps to the vessel's fresh-water tanks. This sounds delightfully simple and easy: but those whose job it is to go water-searching on an ice-bound island amidst glaciers and frozen hummocks will tell you that it is both arduous and even exciting. It is therefore perhaps more accurate to say that modern whaling methods have a romance of their own, different in kind from that of the old three-

masted ships and barques with their own crew who did the flensing; yet, when we come down to plain thinking, is it not the case that distance of time is the real cause of any activity seeming romantic? We speak to-day almost with reverence of life in the old East Indiamen, and even in the clipper ships. It is only because they have gone that we so regard them. Contemporary seamen thought otherwise. And in another hundred years it may be that some people will read into Antarctic steam whalers a great deal of attraction that those of our own time cannot perceive. Well, why not? Can you admire the outside of a beautiful Gothic cathedral if you stand with your nose close alongside a flying buttress?

CHAPTER XXI

THE PRESENT WHALING INDUSTRY

THE average annual number of whales caught in the Dependencies in the years immediately preceding the Great War was 8,314: but this has now risen to 9,915. Many things, such as the varying directions of currents carrying the whales' food elsewhere, are responsible for changing the localities of the cetacean; and therefore it is no fair assumption to argue in a bad season that at last the whale is being exterminated owing to excessive fishing. But where 304,002 barrels of oil were got from the former before the war, 611,372 barrels are now being obtained from the annual catch. In other words, each whale now yields over 61 barrels instead of less than 37 barrels: and the value has gone up to considerably more than three times what it used to be.

Well, for this we have largely to thank the Government restrictions, which not only limit the number of licences, but ever since the year 1921 have compelled the economical utilization of the carcase. The former practice was simply to remove the most valuable portions of the whale, leaving the carcase to rot on the beach. All this has been altered so that waste does not exist. The improved factory methods, mentioned in the last chapter, have further facilitated this innovation. In the olden days ships that used Greenland waters and the Davis Straits used to make more money from the bone than from the oil. For instance, in the year 1860 there were captured by

British vessels eight whales off Greenland and seventy-six up the Davis Straits. Total eighty-four whales, whose produce fetched only £70,828, whale oil being then £1 12s. 6d. per cwt., but the bone realizing £20 10s. od. per cwt. To-day there is very little demand for whalebone, since many cheap and serviceable substitutes have been invented. The whale is hunted principally for its oil, and then only in a by-product sense for the fertilizing guano and meal made out of the meat and bones after the oil has been extracted.

If we take a fairly representative span of years such as from 1860 to 1888, that is to say, when steam was beginning to come in as auxiliary to the sailing whalers, we are in a fair position to compare the results with present-day whaling. And the figures show at once (even after allowing for the changed value of money) that the discovery of the Antarctic grounds has made those Victorian times seem ridiculous. Between those two first-mentioned dates of the nineteenth century there were several years when the Greenland region yielded not one single whale, and the highest figure for any season during that period was only thirty-five. During those same twenty-eight years the Davis Straits never afforded less than ten whales a season but never more than 208. The most remunerative year was 1861, when a total revenue of £112,305 was obtained. From the year 1875, with certain fluctuations, that whole northern fishing decreased both in whale numbers and in actual value, so that, when we come to the year 1886, from the two areas combined only thirty-four whales were taken, and only £34,652 obtained: but this notwithstanding that the price of whalebone had risen from £18 (in the year 1861) to £82 10s. od. per cwt. in 1886. In the last-mentioned year, when whale oil was fetching only a guinea per cwt., it

hardly paid the cost of getting it, and it was only the whalebone which made it worth while to undertake these northern voyages.

We can therefore scarcely wonder that the industry gradually faded away. But if some of those astute old whaling skippers and hardened harpooners could come back to-day and learn that a fleet of fifty-five steam catchers had killed in one Antarctic season 9,915 whales and made £3,056,860 for their owners we should find some interesting comments. I hate to bore the reader with statistics, but this is the only way of proving the tremendous change of prosperity which has come about so recently and so quickly. Since the year 1853 British vessels ceased to hunt the sperm whale: in other words, confined themselves to the search for whalebone. And then flexible steel for umbrellas and women's corsets was introduced, so that there was but little demand for the whalebone after the 'eighties.

But in the year 1880 that experienced whaler Captain D. Gray in the *Eclipse* of Peterhead began hunting that toothed whale species known as the bottlenose. And, what was more, he killed thirty-two of this cetacean in those seas between Labrador and Nova Zembla which had been fished for centuries. Addressing himself to this particular kind, he found that the bluenose existed in large numbers; and in 1882 Scotch whalers killed 463, of which Gray alone killed 203. The year following the British and the Norwegian whaling ships chased the bluenose with such success that the market became glutted. But the incident is worth noting as showing that there were still just as good whales in the sea as ever came out.

That year 1882 was certainly memorable in the annals of our subject, and the *Eclipse* had a short but highly prosperous season: for she caught her first

whale as early as April 27th, but by June 29th she had done so well that every available space in the ship was full of blubber. She had even to throw into the sea all her coal—except just so much as would get her home—in order to find room for her cargo. The result was that she was back in Peterhead by July 5th, with a full ship: that is to say, with 230 tons of oil valued at £60 a ton, or £13,800 for a voyage of only a few weeks. It is perfectly true that for a long time whalers had occasionally taken a bottlenose, and the *Chieftain* of Kirkcaldy had killed twenty-eight off the Frobisher Strait; but it was not until the year 1877 that the *Jan Mayen* of Peterhead, having missed getting seals, captured ten bottlenose whales. After that date the smaller whaling ships began hunting them every season, and the larger ones commenced hunting the bottlenose between seasons: that is, after the end of the seal fishery and before the start of the whaling proper, coming down to the north-east Scottish coast for that purpose.

The relation between the seal and whale fisheries in the north is interesting. Ever since the last quarter of the eighteenth century sealing had been going on off Newfoundland, but it was not till the year 1876 that whalers from Dundee began to engage in this occupation, off there. The right whale had been for such a long time regarded as the only produce worth hunting that attention at first was not paid to anything else in the northern waters. Neither seals nor the white whales were considered worthy of attention. But those British whalers which went up to the Arctic from about 1882 found the whales were getting so scarce that they were only too pleased to fill up with seals as well, if the chance presented itself.

The following brief résumé will show just how

the northern, as distinct from the South Seas whaling, fared from the year 1814, and we can see at once how extreme was the change from good fortune to bad in a very few years. Thus the number of whales killed in the waters of Greenland and the Davis Straits by British ships during the years 1814 to 1823 was 12,907: from 1824 to 1833 it dropped to 9,532, and in 1834 to 1843 it fell remarkably to 1,221. There follows now a serious slump: for whereas in 1857 Peterhead still sent out thirty-four whalers, she possessed not one in the year 1893, the pride of place having passed entirely to Dundee. In the year 1882 there went to the Davis Straits for whales nine Dundee ships, which came back with seventy-eight whales, whose oil and bones yielded a sum of £58,876, oil being at that time £33 a ton, but the value of the whalebone was as much as £1,150 a ton, so rare had it become. The position by 1883 was this: both the Greenland whaling and the Greenland sealing were getting worse and worse, though off Newfoundland it was good. It was bad also in the Davis Straits, and only six vessels went there from Dundee, whilst one from Peterhead got up to the Cumberland Gulf. One of these seven vessels was the whaler *Thetis*, and she came home with the loss of both her carpenter and bo'sun; for whilst they were fast to a whale the boat was carried under by the fouling of the line. In this same year only seven vessels went to Greenland waters and they came back with only nineteen right whales. But whalebone was scarcer than even in the year previous, and had now gone up to £2,000 a ton. And it was just this rise which encouraged the ships and made it worth their while to keep on trying for a time, especially as already the bottlenose, which had been overfished, was beginning to get wary and scarce.

Two new Peterhead whalers were actually added

to the fleet in 1883, and in the following year several steamers were added to the fleet of Dundee, so that by 1885 the latter had the largest collection of sixteen whaling ships, but there was a big fleet working out of Norway chasing the bottlenose whales. However, the down-grade was still continuing, and if we take the period of 1893 to 1902 British ships caught only 172 whales off Greenland and in the Davis Straits. In the year 1903 Dundee's fleet had diminished to five whalers, of which one got wrecked. Thus it was that Arctic whaling had now come down to four vessels and they were only partially successful, and in 1905, although there were six whalers at work up the Davis Straits, which were now the only possible resort, yet this season was so notorious that only a couple of medium-sized whales and one small one were killed up there. The *Eclipse*, one of the most lucky of whalers, came home "clean"; that historic *Diana*, which had once been to the Antarctic, came home "clean"; the *Windward*, another famous ship, came home "clean"; the *Balæna*, which had also once been to the Antarctic, came home now from the Arctic with one whale; and the *Morning* arrived with one whale. In each of these cases only fifteen cwt. of bone were obtained, and the *Active*, that other ship which had once been in that Dundee Antarctic whaling squadron, now came home from the north with one small whale that yielded but three cwt. of bone. The *Morning*, by the way, was another historic vessel. Up till the year 1902 she was a Norwegian whaler and known as the *Morgen*, but she was purchased by the Royal Geographical Society and sent out to the Antarctic, where she discovered a new island, reached Scott's ship *Discovery* and came home in the year 1904, and went back to her career as a whaler.

But this disastrous Arctic season of only three

whales had been aggravated by the long prevalence of easterly winds, which had made the ice so dense that for the first time since 1878 the whalers were unable to get through into Melville Bay, and thus could not reach their favourite grounds near Lancaster Sound. The season of 1906 was unusual in that for the first time since 1899 whales were killed in East Greenland waters, that great expert, Captain Robertson (who had brought the *Scotia* back from the Antarctic to the Clyde in the summer of 1904), having captured four small ones which yielded forty cwt. of bone. But altogether in 1906 seven whalers had been up to the Arctic, of which three came home "clean," and the total catch of the other four from East Greenland, the Davis Straits, and Hudson Straits consisted solely of eight white whales besides a number of seals, walruses, bears and foxes. But oil was now £23 a tun, and whalebone had soared up to £2,500 a ton.

However, at this point Arctic whaling practically fades out of history and the scene of activity shifts to South Georgia and other islands in the Antarctic approaches. Nothing is more significant of the manner in which the Arctic has been fished out than the difference between capturing over a thousand right whales annually at the beginning of the nineteenth century and obtaining only eight white whales in 1906, although in the latter case steam had come in to aid the ships. Since that time the best use to which these stout vessels have been put has been either as exploration craft for Antarctic expeditions or for service with the Hudson Bay Company. It is sad to think that this fine type of wooden ship with her auxiliary steam power must be relegated to the golden age of sailing ships, but now that the steam whale-catcher and the explosive harpoon have so completely altered the industry it is no use wasting

time in vain regrets: we have to face the new conditions and make the best of them.

When Svend Foyn commenced the fin-whale industry with his explosive harpoon and shore factories in the 'sixties, he operated off the coast of Finmarken, that most northerly and most poorly populated part of Norway. Only the coast became permanently inhabited, the settlers having been attracted by the fisheries. The fin whale was practically the only kind of whale found in those parts and Varanger Fjord was the first station to be the scene of the new methods which Foyn inaugurated in 1865. But gradually these steamships began to exhaust the whale supply, and the work moved westward. But in that same year 1886 just mentioned the peak of his success was reached; one station after another had closed down, the numbers of blue whale, fin whale, sei whale and humpback (all of them rorquals) became fewer and fewer so that at last the entire whaling fleet, which by 1886 numbered thirty-four ships, was obtaining from the whole Finmark Sea only half the number of whales which in the 'sixties Svend Foyn had been getting from Varanger Fjord alone.

As to the sperm whale, which at one time was so much hunted by American and British ships, this species is still found in considerable numbers and in various localities: but it is indisputable that the sperm is far less abundant than formerly. The southern right whale has become not exterminated, but much scarcer than he was formerly in the South Seas. The Greenland whale was numerous at the beginning of the seventeenth century, but a hundred years later Davis Straits, as we have seen, became his home, and now he has practically ceased to be hunted there. So, too, we have seen the American whalers chase him through the Bering Straits

into the Arctic, but the industry in this part has now practically ended. The Japanese hunt the Pacific grey whale off the south-east of Korea, but the rorqual fishery off Newfoundland which began in 1897 has gradually got worse and worse, and yet at one time it used to capture an average of 400 whales a year. It is interesting to note that off the south-west coast of Africa all the whales caught were thought to be really those making a passage from the southern ice-barrier towards the waters of the French Congo. But now it is found that fifty per cent. consist of blue whales, and only ten per cent. of humpbacks.

The blue whale is the largest animal in the world, and may measure anything up to a hundred feet in length. He was generally supposed to remain in cold waters, and like the fin whale is hunted in preference to the humpback; because whereas the humpback will yield only twenty to sixty barrels of oil, the fin whale will produce a hundred barrels, but the blue whale is good for 250. Our knowledge of whaling habits is, however, still anything but complete, because in the past our ancestors were too reckless in killing the whale that brought them fortune to study its mode of life. But thanks to modern study and those factories, it is possible now to form deductions which were not practicable in the days of the hand harpoon. For when the whale is hauled ashore, instead of being brought alongside the floating factory, he is pulled up the slip to the flensing platform and can be examined like the human body on the operating table. On the shore are the open boilers for extracting the oil from the blubber. The pressure boilers deal with the carcase after it has been flensed, and after the oil has been run off the dried residue is put into bags as a most wholesome and nutritious meal for cattle-feeding. At the land station in South Georgia of one company where the manager earns

about £2,000 or £3,000 a year, he has under him a whole army of foremen, mechanics, blacksmiths, stewards, cooks, storekeepers, cookers for the open boilers, cookers for the pressure boilers, workmen, flensers, carcase dividers, meat and blubber cutters—all additional to the crews.

But in a floating factory the staff consists of three mates, boatswain, steward, cooks, seamen, firemen, cookers, flensers, carcase dividers and engineers. The personnel of a whale-catcher consists of gunner, mate, steward, four seamen, two engineers and a couple of firemen. All that can be done both ashore and afloat in regard to organization is there. Rather it is in respect of further detailed knowledge concerning the whale himself that the industry stands most in need. But the waters of the globe cover many thousands of miles: so it will take time before complete information arrives. And whilst we know, for example, that the humpback and fin whales are generally met with in schools, whereas the blue whale cruises alone; that the humpback usually goes north about May, returning to South Georgia about October; and that the South Shetlands fin whale moves in February with the current from the south-west to the north-east: yet there is much else besides this that we wish to know, and can obtain only by much observation and long study.

Thus we desire to settle definitely the question whether the southern whale does go to the extreme north from the extreme south. There is a strong probability that he does, for similar barnacles and parasites have been found on northern and southern whales. Certainly the humpback whale has been observed to pass the Equator from south to north, and from the whalebone there seems to be no difference between the fin whales of the north and south. On the other hand, nothing is less satisfactory than

to draw conclusions from an incomplete set of premises. At present there is no sure knowledge of fin whales or blue whales migrating from south to north or north to south. In order to obtain reliable information on this subject metal cylinders have in recent years been fired into the whales from rifles with a view to marking the animals: yet so far none of them has been recovered. But of the fact that whales do migrate we have definite, though limited, information from the harpoons discovered in certain whales. Off the east coast of Africa a whale has been found, still with the harpoon in him, several hundred miles away from the position where he was first attacked.

Ross's erroneous statement as to the right whale being seen in the south has been responsible for the failure of those expeditions of Enderby's Aucklands scheme, of the Dundee whalers, and also of Bull's adventure with Kristensen; for Racovitza, the great zoologist, and other experts believe that what Ross saw were fin whales. Furthermore, the expeditions of Shackleton, Scott and Amundsen have confirmed the fact that the Ross Sea and the pack-ice outside its mouth are visited by many species of rorquals, such as are to-day captured between South Georgia and Graham Land. Whilst there is still a certain amount of whaling being carried on off Alaska, Africa, Brazil and Japan, yet fuller knowledge of the distribution and migration of the whale, the collection of statistics and so on, would conceivably open up new grounds.

With the exception of the humpback, the whales in the Dependencies are just as numerous as ever, though varying with the amount of ice each season. And when we consider the vast size of the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic Seas it would seem hardly likely that the whale will be exterminated there for a considerable period. South Georgia and the South

Shetlands are but tiny dots in a sea far bigger than that old area between Greenland and Spitzbergen. The whale can go on breeding and multiplying over such extensive grounds that Captain Larsen, for one, believes there is no need for anxiety in regard to the future. And he is a supporter from actual observation of the belief that the humpback and the bottle-nose do cross the Equator. But there are hundreds of thousands of whales whose habitation is along the edge of the Antarctic ice and land. In the Ross Sea, as all explorers for nearly the last hundred years have testified, whales exist not in dozens but in immense quantities. Two quotations will be sufficient to substantiate this. The first is a statement by the biologist in Shackleton's volume *The Heart of the Antarctic*: the second is contained in Amundsen's book, already noted.

"This bay, which we afterwards referred to by the appropriate name of the Bay of Whales, was teeming with all the familiar kinds of Antarctic life. Hundreds of whales—killers, finners, and humpbacks—were rising and blowing all round."

"The name 'Bay of Whales' was given by Shackleton, and is well chosen. From the time when the sea ice breaks up, this big gap in the Barrier is a favourite haunt of whales, which were very often seen playing about for hours at a time in flocks of some fifty strong."

So it would seem that about this southern whaling there is something likely to be more permanent than has been the case in the north. Everything, therefore, that can be learned through scientific inquiry as to currents and so on will help commerce: yet whether they will eventually induce the British sailor to forsake his North Sea fishing for the Antarctic is quite another matter. But if there are whales to be got, we must leave them to the Norwegians so long as supply

and demand exist, and yet somehow I cannot conceive that British Dependencies will be neglected by our own countrymen for ever.

It should be mentioned that at the end of the season those factory steamers, having finished flensing, and having filled up their tanks with the whale oil, steam back to Europe. The "catchers," however, return no further north than Monte Video and Buenos Ayres, where they pass the winter, refit and eventually start out again to go south for the following season; the factory steamers, of course, returning with fresh coal and supplies from Europe. During the Great War half a dozen of the latter were torpedoed and one mined; for some of these vessels were employed to carry oil fuel to France and Britain from the United States. In return for this assistance, the British Government has not forgotten to deal favourably with the Norwegian whalers in the Dependencies.

Every one of those whale-catchers is really a pioneer: for these handy little steam craft poke their bows, during the course of their hunting, into all sorts of strange bays and bights and corners, totally unsurveyed, where the factory ships could not venture. Without instruments, but feeling their way in with the lead, these Norse seamen are really repeating history: it is the old Viking idea expressed in action at the other end of the world. No one to-day has such coastal knowledge of these our Falkland Dependencies. Commerce and science being interdependent, a complete hydrographical survey of these parts must soon come: but that which is most pressing is the knowledge of real harbours and sheltered anchorages where the catchers can anchor and the factories can be carried on as they normally are, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Off the islands of the South Sandwich group blue, bottlenose, humpback,

fin and even sperm-whales have been sighted by Captain Larsen; but this group has not been surveyed since the year 1819, and it is obviously desirable in such a tempestuous locality that at least one reliable harbour should be known where ships may rely on finding safety. But South Georgia, South Orkneys, South Shetlands and Graham Land all need to be laid out adequately on the chart with proper sailing directions. Dr. Bruce has suggested the use of aircraft in the summer for settling the existence of islands hinted at by previous explorers but never yet established. When the surveys have been done, it will be possible for the whale-catchers to extend their operations into the waters around the Sandwich group. But until then, how can you expect that vessels in that perpetual weather of hard winds and fog will risk themselves?

Sealing voyages to South Georgia during the eighteenth century, and British whaling trips thither from 1819, were no mere isolated instances: rather they foreshadow what is possible down south. For in the two seasons of 1820–1 and 1821–2, the fur-seal industry was such that ninety-one vessels came to these islands. But after that date the seals had been so wantonly slaughtered that they were practically extinct. Would it not be possible some day to resuscitate the fur-seal fishery? Perhaps the time will come when by a combination of protective laws in regard to the seals, and commercial enterprise in regard to the ships and men, this old industry may be revived like the whaling.

When Captain Cook came to South Georgia and rediscovered it in 1775 he approached it from the north-west. For first of all he sighted an island of ice, but at noon was not sure whether it were ice or land, but anyway it bore east by south, distant thirty-nine miles. But eventually he saw that it was

land, but "in a manner wholly covered with snow. We were confirmed by finding soundings at 175 fathoms, and a muddy bottom." He first came in view of Wallis Island, which lies just off the north-west corner, and "as we advanced to the north we perceived another isle lying" between that other island and the mainland. This is marked on the present-day charts as Bird Island, Cook having noticed so many of these creatures occupying it. The two headlands Cape North and Cape Buller were both named by him and appear still in the modern charts.

But Cook's description of the interior of South Georgia is hardly encouraging. "The inner parts of the country were savage and horrible," he wrote. "The only vegetation we met with was a coarse, strong-bladed grass growing in tufts, wild burnet, and a plant like moss, which sprang from the rocks. Seals were numerous, and several flocks of large penguins were seen. The oceanic birds were albatrosses, common gulls, terns, shags, divers, etc. The land birds were a few small larks. No quadruped was seen." He mentioned that the island "seems to abound with bays and harbours, the N.E. coast especially, but the vast quantity of ice must render them inaccessible for the greater part of the year, or at least it must be dangerous lying in them, on account of the breaking up of the ice cliffs." Weddell, who reached South Georgia nearly fifty years later, was getting rather nervous as to his crew being stricken with scurvy, and hoped that the island would yield some green-stuff. There was precious little, but it was better than nothing for men who had been without fresh vegetables for so long. "Our crews," he wrote, "here fed plenteously on greens which, although bitter, are very salutary, being an excellent anti-scorbutic. With regard to meat we

were supplied with young albatrosses, that is to say, about a year old: the flesh of these is sweet, but not sufficiently firm to be compared with that of the domestic fowl" . . . "almost the only natural production of the soil is a strong-bladed grass, the length of which is in general about two feet. It grows in tufts, on mounds three or four feet from the ground."

Thus Weddell in 1823 confirmed what Cook saw in 1775, but neither could have foreseen what a gold-mine those watery regions were to become in the twentieth century nor how busy many of those north-east bays were to show themselves with steam craft and smoke and oil. Cook named that bold bight, which is just below where to-day the Southern Whaling and Sealing Company have their station, Possession Bay, and took possession of the entire group of islands on behalf of Britain.

Apart from the violent weather, one of the worst drawbacks of the Falklands and its Dependencies is that ancient enemy of all seafarers, the fog. On October 26, 1921, there left Sandefjord the 8,000-ton factory ship *Guvernoren*, bound out for the Dependencies for the season in the usual manner. Originally she had been a Bibby liner, but had been converted for her special work. At Monte Video she picked up three whale-catchers which she was to escort south. But about eleven o'clock one pitch-dark night, when about twenty miles short of Port Stanley, the *Guvernoren* had the bad luck to run ashore in a thick fog. There were ninety-six men aboard her, and they naturally became a little anxious as to their predicament, but the ship's boats were lowered and every man succeeded in getting away from her and put aboard the catchers. And then to those somewhat nerve-tried, jumpy men there came quite a dramatic happening. Some of the crew

were rowing back for others which remained to be fetched off the big steamer, but on the return trip there suddenly came out of that fog a terrifying sound as of a man crying out for help. So the boats turned this way and that, trying in the thick atmosphere to find some desperate shipmate struggling in the water. It was both startling and saddening, for it was going to be no easy task if he were to be located in that fog. However, sorrow soon turned to amusement, for the cries were not of men but of seals: so all was well.

The whale-catchers were able to get fairly near to the wreck, but there was a very high sea running, and it was a lucky achievement to have saved everyone. Throughout the night these catchers stood by, and next morning, after the *Guvernoren* had settled down on to the rocks, some of the men went back and pluckily climbed on board to salve some of their clothes. The catchers then made for Port Stanley—that port always to be famous for its connection with the Battle of the Falklands—whence a crowd of shipwrecked mariners embarked for Liverpool in the *Orcoma* liner.

Once a liner in the Pacific off Santa Maria was caught in a dense fog, and since the coast was dangerous, the captain stopped his engine and waited for the atmosphere to clear. But at six in the morning there was a strange sound coming up from the sea and suddenly the ship trembled. Everybody wondered what had happened, for the tremor was too gentle for an earthquake, and it was accompanied by bumping, as if the steamship was hitting soft ground. But the anxiety did not last long in this case: for that noise was unquestionably a whale blowing, and now there rose out of the sea a great cetacean a good 100 ft. long, and came floating alongside just as if it were one of those capsized sailing vessels one used to see

after enemy submarines had been busy in certain waters.

But aboard the liner the mammal caused a sensation, for he now dived, and as he collided with the steel ship the tremors began again. Once more he floated alongside, and then the barnacles and shellfish which had been scraped off by contact with the steamer's bilge keels came rushing up to the surface. Evidently the whale was enjoying himself, for now he proceeded to the other side of the ship, and began scratching himself once more. The passengers pelted him with potatoes and coal, but the great animal took no notice whatever until he swallowed a piece of the latter, and then, sending up a drenching spout of water, passed majestically on his way.

CHAPTER XXII

COLONIAL CONTROL

WHEN Captain Cook described these islands as "a country doomed by nature never once to feel the warmth of the sun's rays, but to lie buried in everlasting snow and ice," and went on to suggest that this "coast which, when discovered and explored, would have answered no end whatever, or have been of the least value, either to navigation or to geography or, indeed, to any other science," he could scarcely have foreseen that more than three millions sterling would in the twentieth century annually be derived from this neighbourhood.

At South Georgia, with its mass of high snow-covered mountains, its valleys of glaciers, but its coastal area in the summer free from snow, there is a Resident Magistrate; but at the other Dependencies a representative of the British Colonial Government accompanies one of the expeditions. In the case of South Georgia the Resident Magistrate is located at Grytviken Harbour, King Edward's Cove, on the east side of the island. In fact, all the whaling stations are on that side, beginning from Allardyce Harbour at the north down to New Fortune Bay about half-way down the coast, some thirty-five miles to the south-east. The numerous bays and natural harbours lend themselves there most conveniently to the use of the headquarters for the various companies who have leased the sites.

The Government of the Falklands has allowed five shore stations at South Georgia, each site of 500

acres being taken up for a period of twenty-one years at a rent annually of £250; but there are also five unoccupied sites on that east coast for which rent is still paid. The leases include the right to use two whale-catchers without further licence. With the South Shetlands fleet there go a Magistrate and a whaling officer, leaving in November and coming back with it in April. South Georgia is the only portion of these Dependencies which is habitable all the year round, for the harbours elsewhere are ice-bound for seven months out of the twelve; so the flensing and boiling down are done in the floating factories, which can steam off before the ice sets in. Besides South Georgia there are shore stations at Deception Island and at the South Orkneys, the personnel for running them arriving and returning with the whaling fleets.

Thus we have one of the most interesting nomadic communities in the world and one intimately connected with the sea. It was decided in 1912 that the number of licences issued in any one year for the South Shetlands with Graham Land should not exceed ten, and not more than seven for either the South Orkneys or the South Sandwich Islands. Since October 1914 no further licences or whaling leases other than in South Georgia can be issued, but renewals of existing licences are permissible. It is to the credit of the British Colonial Office that all the revenue derived from these Dependencies is, as far as possible, devoted to the further development of their resources. For the sake of practical politics the South Sandwich Islands have not yet entered into this consideration. But it is possible that when surveys have taken place and a safe harbour assured, we may find matters going ahead, yet owing to the poisonous fumes it is doubtful if there will ever be a land station.

During the war there was an increased demand for oil, but all over the world, except off South Georgia, the whale was being hunted far less. It therefore became advisable to allow the temporary employment of a greater number of catchers down here. Legislation wisely limits the extent to which whaling may take place, and minimizes the amount of waste. Under the former decision we have the restriction of the number of licences, but there is no direct regulating of the number of whales to be caught. One may mention in passing the financial side of these Dependencies, which is not without interest. If we take the latest figures—that is for the year 1923—we find that the Government revenue derived from them in that period amounted to £160,221, the local expenditure being only £7,436. But at the end of that year there was a surplus of £315,795 assets over liabilities, of which £300,302 became earmarked for the Research Fund. It is thus that the research vessel *Discovery* was able to set forth from Portsmouth in the summer of 1925 on these investigations about which so much is expected in the future.

Formerly the catch consisted chiefly of humpback whales, though latterly it is the blue, and also the fin whale, which have predominated. But a greater incentive has been offered towards capturing the two last; for the bonus to the gunner, additional to his monthly pay, works out in the following number of kroner:—for that somewhat rare right whale, 200; for the less rare sperm whale, 100; for the blue whale, 80; for the fin whale, 50; for the humpback, 30 kroner. The reason for this becomes obvious when we state that a blue whale usually yields from 70 to 80 barrels of oil, a right whale 60 to 70, a sperm whale 60, a fin whale from 35 to 50, but a humpback from 25 to 35 only. We spoke some time back of

New Island, one of the Falkland group. Here in the year 1908 the British firm of Messrs. Salvesen & Co. of Leith established a whaling factory which continued until 1916, when it was dismantled and removed to South Georgia, which is now the only one of the Dependencies where whaling can be carried on in both summer and winter.

In the old sailing-ship days one of the customs was to attack a whale calf, well knowing that the mother whale would not desert its young; and thus the elder and more valuable whale would fall to the hunter. This cruel and wasteful method is strictly forbidden in the Dependencies. Neither a calf nor a female whale accompanied by a calf may be killed. Apart from sentimental reasons this is sound policy unless it be desired to endeavour to exterminate the species. And as further illustrative of the broad, sensible lines of the whaling legislation in these parts it is worth noting that the lessees are required to keep an accurate record of meteorological observations and to maintain a stock of coal and provisions which are to be supplied at cost price to any ship requiring them. We know that both Shackleton and Charcot availed themselves of this privilege.

In reckoning the amount of oil we count six barrels to the ton, and it is worth while to consider now the relation which the whale to-day bears to commerce. Before the war whale oil was used for burning, for lubrication, for soap-making and currying leather. It then found itself in great demand in the manufacture of glycerine for munition-making, and also for the different fabrication of margarine. Sperm oil is used for such delicate machinery as sewing-machines and watches. The demand for whalebone is not what it once was, but in the thirteenth century it was used among other purposes

for the plumes on helmets. From the meat and bones are obtained whale-meat meal, largely used in feeding cattle; whale guano, which is rich in phosphates; and there is produced from the bones alone what is called bone meal, also rich in these phosphates. But the entire carcase may be turned into guano after extracting the blubber for oil. Ambergris is used in order to make perfumes more lasting.

During the war whale oil was so invaluable to the British Government that one of the greatest authorities has remarked that without it we should have been able to produce the required amount of neither food nor munitions. It seems strange to think that a number of whales cruising innocently in the neighbourhood of the Antarctic can have the slightest effect on a war being fought many thousand miles away in Europe: but it shows the interrelation of affairs and mutual dependence in our modern civilization. Glycerine we all remember to have been difficult to obtain during the latter stages of the war even by medical men. Before hostilities it was just a by-product in the manufacture of soap: but after the demand for explosives became so tremendous soap-making became a by-product of the glycerine industry. The British Government during the war made special arrangements with three English firms for utilizing the whole of the whale oil imported.

Modern sub-Antarctic whaling is very different from the old Greenland industry, quite apart from the change from sail to steam. It is different, too, from that fine, romantic period when American whaling ships under sail used to hunt the cetacean in every tropical sea of the world. The latter vessels were of lighter build and greater speed than those which had to be so strong and heavy in order to

resist the ice pressure. Those American ships were not intended for ice work, and their working costs were not great. They could build cheaply along the New England coast where there was plenty of timber near to the sea. But about the year 1846 American whaling with its fleet of 735 ships reached its high-water mark, and the ebb set in with such certainty that from 1877–86 an average of only 159 such craft was annually employed. So also by the year 1886 the best type of Norwegian whaler was a vessel of only eighty tons and of thirty horse-power. Fitted with the Svend Foyn harpoon-gun these comparatively cheap vessels had been able to kill for their oil and bone most of a thousand blue whales, humpbacks and other rorquals, and then tow then into the fjords of Finmark.

But in the Antarctic the conditions are all so serious that no one can embark on this undertaking except in a big way. Everything seems multiplied by comparison with the circumstances of the nineteenth century. Thus, before the whaler can reach his cruising ground a far longer distance must be covered, with a greater cost in fuel. The vessels need fewer hands, but they cost more to build and to run. Moreover the value of the individual Antarctic whale is inferior to the Greenland species. Greater activity, at a greater distance, more detailed organization but far more initial capital are the conditions which have in this twentieth century become essential. Not for a century have the Greenland whales been hunted in those Arctic waters between East Greenland, Spitzbergen and Jan Mayen Islands, where the cetacean was once numerous and in convenient proximity to the fleets of the north. And alongside our optimism in regard to the Antarctic we must place the plain observed fact that when a

species of whale has by over-fishing been wiped out of any area, he does not go back to that region even long years after the fleets have given up using those waters. Of this we may quote two historical instances. For centuries the whale was hunted in the Bay of Biscay, right up till the sixteenth century, when it was about to be exterminated, had not the Greenland whaling grounds been discovered. To this day the Biscayan whale has never recovered its former numerical preponderance. Similarly, the Finmark rorqual was hunted to extermination so that the industry came to a full stop after a few intensive years. If, then, the whales should be exterminated for a period in the waters of the Falklands Dependencies, it is improbable that even after a respite they would return. Thus the whole commercial value of these distant parts would vanish as soon as the whaling stations ceased to have any financial reason for existence. Indeed, there are those who believe that by the time the twentieth century has run out, there will be no more whales to hunt: they will become as past and banished as the prehistoric animals are to us to-day.

This is the extreme pessimistic view, but it has to be borne in mind so long as our scientific knowledge is incomplete, especially in regard to the whale's migrations. This of course arouses the question of protective measures to control the hunting: and these, again, are capable of crippling the industry as a dividend-earner. For instance, it might be found theoretically advisable to prohibit occasionally all whaling for several years in order to allow the stock of cetaceans to increase. But what company could afford to let its plant and shipping remain in harbour idle and deteriorating during those years? How would it be possible to keep together those skilled

gunners and flensers until such time as their services were again required?

These are some of the problems which have to be faced sooner or later, and we cannot possibly ignore them too long.

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